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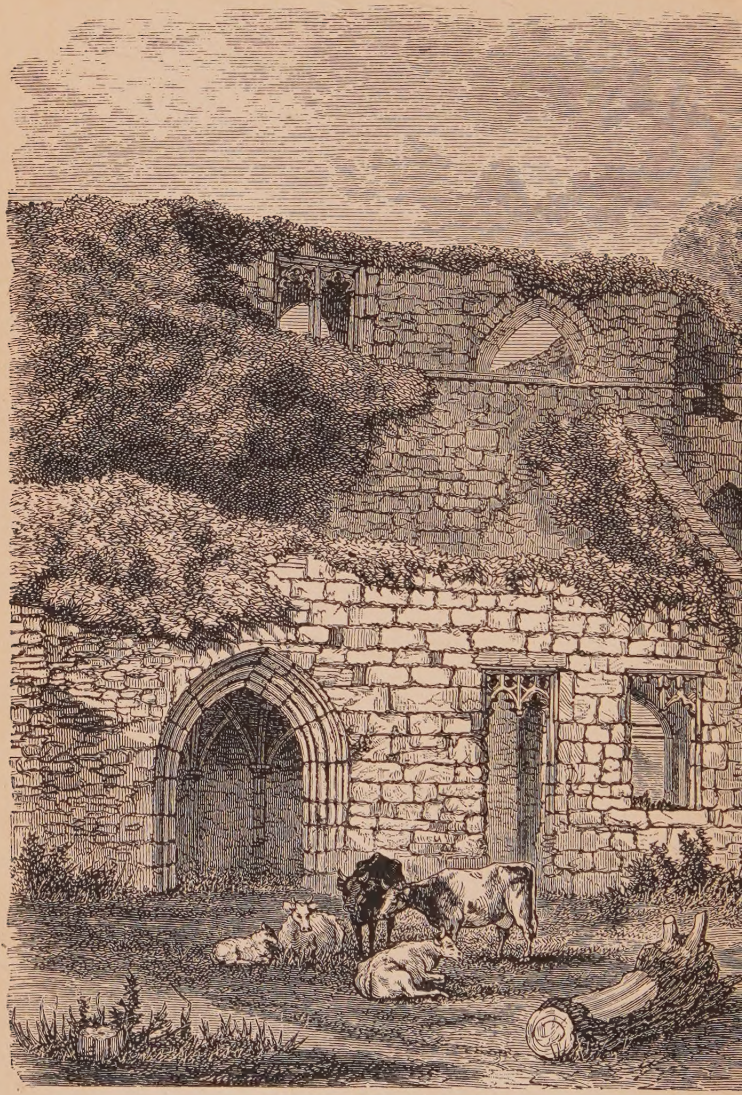

"Then view St. David's ruin'd pile;
And, home returning, soothly swear,
Was never scene so sad and fair!"

SCOTT. *Lay of the Last Minstrel—Canto II.*—Page 17.

THE

POETICAL WORKS

OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT

1771-
1832

With Notes and Memoir.

COMPLETE EDITION.

ILLUSTRATED.

NEW YORK:
THE AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY,
39 AND 41 CHAMBERS STREET.

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MEMOIR

OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Sir Walter Scott was born on the 15th of August, 1771, in the old town of Edinburgh. His father, Walter Scott, was, by profession, a Writer to the Signet—that is, a solicitor or attorney, authorized to practice before the highest courts of Scottish judicature. His mother was Anne Rutherford, eldest daughter of Dr. John Rutherford, Professor of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh. Both on the father and mother's side, Sir Walter belonged to some of the oldest and most distinguished families in the south of Scotland. In his autobiographical fragment, he writes: "My father's grandfather was Walter Scott, well known in Teviotdale by the surname of *Beardie*. He was the second son of Walter Scott, first Laird of Raeburn, who was third son of Sir William Scott, and the grandson of Walter Scott, commonly called in tradition '*Auld Watt* of Harden.' I am therefore lineally descended from that ancient chieftain, whose name I have made to ring in many a ditty, and from his fair dame, the 'Flower of Yarrow,'—no bad genealogy for a Border minstrel."

The poet's father was nearly thirty years of age when he married; and six children born to him, between 1759 and 1766, all perished in infancy.

The subject of our memoir was an uncommonly healthy child; but owing to a fever in his eighteenth month, he lost the use of his right leg, which never afterwards recovered its natural strength or symmetry; and thus Scott, like his illustrious contemporary, Byron, was troubled with life-long lameness. Like Byron, also, though in an inferior degree, he endured no small amount of torture from the abortive attempts made to rectify his unfortunate deformity by artificial contrivances.

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In 1778, he was sent to the second class of the Grammar, or High School, of Edinburgh, then taught by Mr. Luke Fraser—"a good Latin scholar, and a very worthy man." But Scott made no great figure at the High School. All his exertions were desultory, and little to be depended on; and in all the branches of juvenile instruction, he was surpassed by hundreds of boys of whom the world has never heard.

After being three years under the public school tuition of Luke Fraser, he was "turned over" to Dr. Adam, the rector. He afterwards attended the Grammar School, Kelso, where he first became acquainted with James and John Ballantyne, who afterwards became his partners and publishers of some of his most celebrated works. He returned to Edinburgh, and entered the College, in November, 1783. Scott's university career was not a brilliant one. His progress in the Latin language was slow and halting; and as for Greek, he contracted an invincible repugnance to that noble tongue. His progress in mathematics, moral philosophy, and metaphysics was much more satisfactory, and the celebrated Dugald Stewart was led to entertain a very high opinion of his pupil.

In 1785, he entered into indentures with his father, and for a time attempted to make himself at home upon the dry and barren wilderness of forms and conveyances. It was in the discharge of his duties as a writer's (solicitor) apprentice that he first penetrated to the Highlands, and formed those friendships, among the surviving of 1745, which laid the foundation for one great class of his works. At this time he became a ravenous devourer of works of romantic fiction. He says: "The whole Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy tribe I abhorred; but all that was adventurous and romantic, I devoured without much discrimination; and I really believe I have read as much nonsense of this class as any man now living."

It was resolved that Scott should qualify himself for the highest branch of the law; and accordingly, having gone through the prescribed preparations, he was admitted a member of the Society of Advocates—"that is, called to the bar"—on the 11th of July, 1792.

He did not set to work to procure himself much practice in his profession. For some time after his admission into the society of "Advocates," he applied with great earnestness to the study of German.

On the 24th of December, 1797, Walter Scott and Charlotte Margaret Carpenter were married in St. Mary's Church, Carlisle. When the honeymoon was over, they went to reside in a lodging in George Street, Edinburgh. His parents were not at first favourable to the match; but, after the first fortnight, they were satisfied that she had the sterling qualities of a good wife, though her manners and ideas, owing to her French education, were not of a kind to amalgamate well with those of her husband's parents.

Scott's literary efforts began at a very early age. But it is probable that the first of his poetical effusions that ever appeared in print was his spirited translation from the German of Burger, of the ballad of "Lenore" and the "Wild Huntsman."

These translations were published in 1796, and were admired by competent judges, on account of their felicitous blending of true poetic fire with fidelity to the original.

From this year, until the date of his death, in 1832, it may be said that Scott's muse never rested. His was the most indefatigable and prolific pen in Europe. Metrical romance, ballad, song, historical, or romantic novel, essay, history, political pamphlet, biographies of departed celebrities, dramas, flowed with almost unbroken regularity from his teeming brain.

Shortly after his translations from the German were published, his "War Song of the Edinburgh Light Dragoons," a version of Gœthe's tragedy of "Goets von Berlichingen of the Iron Hand," and a drama, which he called the "House of Aspen." His first original ballads were "Glenfinlas," the "Eve of St. John," "The Grey Brother," the "Fire-King," "Bothwell Castle," "The Shepherd's Tale," "Fragments," &c.;—all these were published in the years 1797, 1798.

He now began the preparations for his first important work —"The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border;" the first two volumes of which appeared in 1802. The third volume was published in the course of the following year. In 1804, the metrical romance of "Sir Tristrem" was published. At this time, Scott's income, arising from a small patrimony, his office as sheriff, his literary profits, were nearly, if not quite, £1,000 a year.

In 1805, "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" was published. This work compelled the public to recognise Scott as one of the greatest poets of the day. The "Lay" is an unequal performance; it contains many passages which, for mingled fire, fancy,

and brilliancy, are unsurpassed by anything that he subsequently produced.

In the same year he entered into partnership with Mr. James Ballantyne; undertook to edit an edition of the British poets; Dryden's life and works, and the novel of "Waverley," which, however, was not published for several years afterwards. In 1808, "Marmion," in the opinion of many, his greatest poem, was published. In 1810, the "Lady of the Lake," unquestionably the most popular of his poetical efforts, was given to the world. Then followed, in quick succession, "Don Roderick" (1811), "Rokeby" (1812), the "Bridal of Triermain" (1813), &c., &c. At this time his income from various sources was about £2,100 a year. At the same time he was offered the Poet-Laureatship by the Prince-Regent. Scott, who was keenly sensitive to the ridicule, declined the place—partly because he knew that he should be "well quizzed" if he accepted such an office, and partly on the ground that he would be engrossing a "petty emolument which might do real service to a poorer brother of the Muse." The Laureatship, which Scott refused, was at once offered to, and accepted by, Robert Southey.

In 1814, "Waverley," begun nine years previously, and twice laid aside, was published. It took the whole novel-reading world by delightful surprise, so original was its style, so fresh and natural its characters, and so deliciously different the entire spirit and composition of the work from the stereotyped insipidity of the vast majority of the novels in vogue prior to the appearance of Scott as a competitor in the ample field of prose fiction.

Next year, 1815, saw the publication of the "Lord of the Isles," a magnificent narrative poem, having for its theme the dangers and achievements of the heroic Robert Bruce, in the struggle for Scottish independence against the formidable Edward the First of England. The same year, "Guy Mannering," one of the most popular and delightful of all his prose fictions, was published.

Scott had now found out that his strength lay in this style of composition; and henceforward his mental energies were mainly exerted in the construction of novels illustrative of national manners and customs, or romances, in which memorable and important historical events and personages were described with a vigour and picturesqueness altogether new in English literature.

But though henceforward his genius was mainly devoted to novels and historical romances, he never wholly abandoned the enchanted region of metrical composition. Thus we find him, in 1815, writing a poem on "The Field of Waterloo,"—a signal failure, by the way. Next year, the "Antiquary," probably the most humorous of all his prose works, was published. In 1817, "Harold the Dauntless," a metrical story descriptive of some of the Danish invaders of England, and their ravages. This year also witnessed the publication of "Rob Roy." In 1818, appeared the "Heart of Midlothian," which, even for his works, obtained an extraordinary degree of popularity. Next year, 1819, the "Bride of Lammermoor," the "Legend of Montrose," and in December of the same year, "Ivanhoe," were given to the world. Of all his works, "Ivanhoe" was the one which was most extensively circulated and most generally admired in England.

Of the remaining twelve years of his life, the following are the principal works:—The "Monastery" (1820), the "Abbot" (1820), "Kenilworth" and the "Pirate" (1821), the "Fortunes of Nigel" and "Peverel of the Peak" (1822), "Quentin Durward," "St. Ronan's Well," "Essays on Romance," "Macduff's Cross" (1823), "Red Gauntlet," and "Tales of the Crusaders" (1824). In 1826, he began his "Life of Napoleon Bonaparte," and completed various reviews, memoirs, &c. In 1826, the novel of "Woodstock," "Chronicles of the Cannongate," "Letters of Malachi Malagrowther," a political treatise, written in a shrewd, semi-sarcastic strain, in the spirit of an "uncompromising right forward Scott of the old school," and various minor works were published.

Next year, 1829, saw the publication of the "Life of Napoleon Bonaparte," "Tales of a Grandfather," "Essays on the Planting of Waste Lands," "Prose Miscellanies," and other miscellaneous books.

In 1828, he was busy in preparing a new edition of the poetry, with biographical prefaces, and a uniform reprint of the novels, each to be introduced with an account of the hints on which it had been founded, and illustrated throughout by historical and antiquarian annotations. The same year, the charming novel of "The Fair Maid of Perth" was published. In 1829, "Anne of Gierstein," a "History of Scotland" in Lardner's Encyclopædia, review of "Ancient Scottish History," "Tales of a

Grandfather" (third series), were published. The following year (1830), was occupied with a great deal of miscellaneous literary work—the principal of which was "Auchindrane, or the Ayrshire Tragedy," "Essays on Ancient Poetry," and "Imitations of the Ancient Ballad," "Letters on Demonology." 1831 witnessed the publication of "Count Robert of Paris" and "Castle Dangerous"—both of them a melancholy falling off from the "Guy Mannering" and "Ivanhoe," which marked the zenith of his intellect. Scott's last attempts at romance-writing were made at Naples, a few months before his death. Here he began and finished a novel, which he called "The Siege of Malta," and a shorter tale, "Bizarro." Of these feeble efforts of a fast-expiring genius, his son-in-law and biographer says, "neither of these novels will, I hope, see the light."

The purchase of Abbotsford took place in 1811. Next year he removed from Ashetiel, a neighbouring estate, and took up his abode in his new mansion, on the building and furnishing of which he had expended an immense sum. Here he was inundated with an incessant stream of visitors, many of whom were men and women, illustrious in art, science, literature, or arms, from every other country in Europe and America; but the great majority were utterly obscure persons, whose animating motive was mere vulgar curiosity, and with whose intrusion he would have gladly dispensed, though they all received a courteous welcome.

The year 1826 was, in some respects, the most important, and, in all things, the most disastrous, in Sir Walter's life. He had been a partner, first in the printing and publishing firms of John and James Ballantyne, and afterwards in that of Constable and Co. In the financial crisis that occurred in that year, these firms, as well as many others, became bankrupt to immense amounts. As a partner, Scott was responsible to the creditors, and the earnings of a laborious lifetime were all swallowed up. The alluring vision of being the founder of a great territorial family dissolved into thin air. But though heartbroken, he did not despair. He set himself manfully to work to pay all his creditors; and by the disposal of copyrights, and exertions the most arduous, he, at the Christmas of 1827, succeeded in paying a dividend of six shillings in the pound. The result of his heroic endeavours, between January, 1826, and January, 1828, was the enormous sum of £40,000! Well may his son-in-law

observe, "No literary biographer, in all likelihood, will ever have such a fact to record."

His financial embarrassments necessitated his acknowledgment of the authorship of the "Waverley Novels," which till then were published anonymously, and which circumstance, owing to their immense popularity, excited a great deal of controversy as to their author. Scott had a strong liking for mystery implanted in his nature. He delighted in puzzling his friends and the public on subjects of this description. At the same time, more was made of the anonymous authorship of his prose fictions than was at all necessary—for in literary circles there was hardly the shadow of a doubt as to who the "Great Unknown" was, long before his public avowal of the "sole and undivided" authorship of the tales in question, in 1827.

The great misfortune of 1826 broke the spirit, and shattered the health, of Sir Walter. In 1831, he was advised to reside in the south of Italy, on account of the delicate state of his health. A government frigate was placed at his disposal; and in October, 1831, he embarked at Portsmouth, on board the Barham, one of the finest frigates in the navy; and after a short sojourn at Malta, arrived at Naples on the 27th of December. Here he resided till the following April, when, feeling himself dying, he set out for Scotland, paying a visit to Rome on his journey. On the 11th of July, 1832, he found himsef once more at his beloved Abbotsford, surrounded by his sorrowing family, who were now alive to the mournful fact that the earthly existence of one of the kindest fathers and most faithful friends that ever lived was to be numbered by days, if not by hours and minutes. By this time, the once stalwart and vigorous frame was completely helpless. His mind, also, was evidently entraced with other than the material realities around him. He had great difficulty in recognising the scenes and persons most familiar to him. He had, however, some lucid intervals, in which the overtasked brain flashed forth sparks of its wonted keen and penetrating intelligence.

It was not, however, until the 21st of September, 1832, about half-past one p.m., that Sir Walter Scott breathed his last, in the presence of all his children.

A post-mortem examination showed that there was a slight softening of the brain, but his death was the result of the complete, though gradual, decay of his whole vital powers. On the

26th of September he was buried in Dryburgh Abbey, by th
side of his wife, in the sepulchre of his ancestors.

Sir Walter Scott had four children, two of whom were son
Walter, the elder, who succeeded his father in the title, was
lieutenant-colonel in the 15th Hussars. Charles became a Cler
in the Foreign Office. Sophie, the eldest daughter, was ma
ried to John Lockhart, Esq., M.P., for many years editor of th
"Quarterly Review," and a poet, novelist, essayist, and tran
lator of no ordinary power. Annie, his second daughter, die
unmarried.

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THE LAY

OF

THE LAST MINSTREL.

A Poem.

IN SIX CANTOS.

"Dum relego, scripsisse pudet; quia plurima cerno,
Me quoque, qui feci, judice, digna lini."

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

CHARLES, EARL OF DALKEITH,

THIS POEM IS INSCRIBED BY THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION, 1805.

The Poem now offered to the Public is intended to illustrate the customs and manners, which anciently prevailed on the Borders of England and Scotland. The inhabitants, living in a state partly pastoral and partly warlike, and combining habits of constant depredation with the influence of a rude spirit of chivalry, were often engaged in scenes highly susceptible of poetical ornament. As the description of scenery and manners was more the object of the Author, than a combined and regular narrative, the plan of the ancient metrical romance was adopted, which allows greater latitude, in this respect, than would be consistent with the dignity of a regular poem. The same model offered other facilities, as it permits an occasional alteration of measure, which, in some degree, authorizes the changes of rhythm in the text. The machinery also, adopted from popular belief, would have seemed puerile in a poem, which did not partake of the rudeness of the old Ballad, or Metrical Romance.

For these reasons, the Poem was put into the mouth of an ancient Minstrel, the last of the race, who, as he is supposed to have survived the Revolution, might have caught somewhat of the refinement of modern poetry, without losing the simplicity of his original model. The date of the tale itself is about the middle of the sixteenth century, when most of the personages actually flourished. The time occupied by the action is three nights and three days.

INTRODUCTION.

THE way was long, the wind was cold,
The Minstrel was infirm and old;
His withered cheek, and tresses grey,
Seemed to have known a better day;
The harp, his sole remaining joy,
Was carried by an orphan boy:
The last of all the Bards was he,
Who sung of Border chivalry;
For, well-a-day! their date was fled,
His tuneful brethren all were dead;
And he, neglected and oppressed,
Wished to be with them, and at rest.
No more, on prancing palfrey borne,
He carolled, light as lark at morn;
No longer, courted and caressed,
High placed in hall, a welcome guest,
He poured, to lord and lady gay,
The unpremeditated lay:
Old times were changed, old manners gone;
A stranger filled the Stuarts' throne;
The bigots of the iron time
Had called his harmless art a crime.
A wandering harper, scorned and poor,
He begged his bread from door to door;
And tuned, to please a peasant's ear,
The harp a King had loved to hear.

He passed where Newark's* stately tower
Looks out from Yarrow's birchen bower:
The Minstrel gazed with wishful eye—
No humbler resting-place was nigh.
With hesitating step, at last,
The embattled portal-arch he passed,
Whose ponderous grate, and massy bar,
Had oft rolled back the tide of war,

*Newark Castle on the Yarrow, near Selkirk. The ruins of this old border fortress may still be seen. It was probably built by the first earl of Douglas. This was the birth-place of Anne, first duchess of Monmouth and Buccleuch.

But never closed the iron door
Against the desolate and poor.
The Duchess* marked his weary pace,
His timid mien, and reverend face,
And bade her page the menials tell,
That they should tend the old man well.
For she had known adversity,
Though born in such a high degree;
In pride of power, in beauty's bloom,
Had wept o'er Monmouth's bloody tomb!

When kindness had his wants supplied,
And the old man was gratified,
Began to rise his minstrel pride:
And he began to talk, anon,
Of good Earl Francis,† dead and gone,
And of Earl Walter,‡ rest him God!
A braver ne'er to battle rode:
And how full many a tale he knew,
Of the old warriors of Buccleuch;
And, would the noble Duchess deign
To listen to an old man's strain,
Though stiff his hand, his voice though weak,
He thought e'en yet, the sooth to speak,
That, if she loved the harp to hear,
He could make music to her ear.

The humble boon was soon obtained;
The aged Minstrel audience gained.
But, when he reached the room of state,
Where she, with all her ladies, sate,
Perchance he wished his boon denied:
For, when to tune his harp he tried,
His trembling hand had lost the ease,
Which marks security to please;
And scenes, long past, of joy and pain,
Came wildering o'er his aged brain—
He tried to tune his harp in vain.
The pitying Duchess praised its chime,
And gave him heart, and gave him time,
Till every string's according glee
Was blended into harmony.
And then, he said, he would full fain
He could recall an ancient strain,
He never thought to sing again.
It was not framed for village churls,
But for high dames and mighty earls;

* Anne, duchess of Buccleuch and Monmouth, representative of the ancient lords of Buccleuch, and widow of the unfortunate James, duke of Monmouth, who was beheaded in 1685.

† Francis Scott, earl of Buccleuch, father of the duchess.

‡ Walter, earl of Buccleuch, grandfather to the duchess, and a celebrated warrior.

He had played it to King Charles the Good,
When he kept court at Holyrood;*
And much he wished, yet feared, to try
The long-forgotten melody.

Amid the strings his fingers strayed,
And an uncertain warbling made—
And oft he shook his hoary head:
But when he caught the measure wild,
The old man raised his face, and smiled;
And lightened up his faded eye,
With all a poet's ecstasy!
In varying cadence, soft or strong,
He swept the sounding chords along:
The present scene, the future lot,
His toils, his wants were all forgot:
Cold diffidence, and age's frost,
In the full tide of song were lost:
Each blank, in faithless memory void,
The poet's glowing thought supplied;
And, while his harp responsive rung,
'Twas thus the LATEST MINSTREL sung.

* Holyrood House is situated at the foot of the Canongate, in Edinburgh, and it was for many years the dwelling-place of the monarchs of Scotland. The abbey was founded in 1128, and a royal residence was soon afterwards built there. Very little of the ancient building now remains. In this palace David Rizzio was murdered; and here the unfortunate Mary kept her court. When Charles I. visited Scotland in 1633, for his coronation, he kept court at Holyrood. Clarendon says: "The king was very well pleased with his reception, and with all the transactions there; nor indeed was there anything to be blamed, but the luxury and vast expense, which abounded in all respects, of feasting and clothes with too much license."

THE

LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL.

CANTO FIRST.

I.

THE feast was over in Branksome* tower,
And the Ladye had gone to her secret bower;
Her bower, that was guarded by word and by spell,
Deadly to hear, and deadly to tell—
Jesu Maria, shield us well!
No living wight, save the Ladye alone,
Had dared to cross the threshold stone.

II.

The tables were drawn, it was idlesse all;
Knight, and page, and household squire,
Loitered through the lofty hall,
Or crowded round the ample fire.
The stag-hounds, weary with the chase,
Lay stretched upon the rushy floor,
And urged, in dreams, the forest race,
From Teviot-stone to Eskdale-moor.

III.

Nine-and-twenty knights of fame†
Hung their shields in Branksome Hall;
Nine-and-twenty squires of name
Brought them their steeds from bower to stall;

* In the reign of James I., Sir William Scott, of Buccleuch, chief of the clan bearing that name, exchanged with Sir Thomas Inglis, of Manor, the estate of Murdiestone, in Lanarkshire, for one half of the barony of Branksome, or Brankholm, on the Teviot, about three miles above Hawick. Tradition imputes this exchange to a conversation between Scott and Inglis, in which the latter, a man, it would appear, of a mild and forbearing nature, complained of the injuries to which he was exposed from the English borderers, who frequently plundered his lands of Branksome. Sir William Scott instantly offered him the estate of Murdiestone, in exchange for that which was subject to such forays. When the bargain was completed, he drily remarked, that the cattle in Cumberland were as good as those of Teviot-dale, and commenced a system of reprisals upon the English, which was regularly pursued by his successors.

† The ancient barons of Buccleuch, both from feudal splendour and from their frontier situation, retained in their household, at Branksome, a number of gentlemen of their own name, who held lands from their chief for the military service of watching and warding his castle.

Nine-and-twenty yeomen tall,
Waited, duteous, on them all:
They were all knights of mettle true,
Kinsmen to the bold Buccleuch.

IV.

Ten of them were sheathed in steel,
With belted sword and spur on heel;
They quitted not their harness bright,
Neither by day, nor yet by night:
They lay down to rest
With corslet laced,
Pillowed on buckler cold and hard;
They carved at the meal
With gloves of steel,
And they drank the red wine through the helmet barred.

V.

Ten squires, ten yeomen, mail-clad men,
Waited the beck of the warders ten,
Thirty steeds, both fleet and wight,
Stood saddled in stable day and night,
Barbed with frontlet of steel, I trow,
And with Jedwood-axe* at saddle-bow:
A hundred more fed free in stall:—
Such was the custom of Branksome Hall.

VI.

Why do these steeds stand ready dight?
Why watch these warriors, armed, by night?
They watch, to hear the blood-hound baying;
They watch, to hear the war-horn braying;
To see St. George's red cross streaming,
To see the midnight beacon gleaming;
They watch, against Southern force and guile,
Lest Scroop, or Howard, or Percy's powers,
Threaten Branksome's lordly towers,
From Warkworth, or Naworth, or merry Carlisle.†

VII.

Such is the custom of Branksome Hall,
Many a valiant knight is here;
But he, the Chieftain of them all,
His sword hangs rusting on the wall,
Beside his broken spear.
Bards long shall tell,
How Lord Walter fell!‡

* This was a sort of partizan, used by horsemen, as appears from the arms of Jedburgh, which bear a cavalier mounted and armed with this weapon. It is also called a Jedwood, or Jeddart staff.

† Branksome Castle was continually exposed to the attacks of the English, both from its situation and the restless military disposition of its inhabitants, who were seldom on good terms with their neighbours.

‡ Sir Walter Scott, of Buccleuch, succeeded to his grandfather, Sir

When startled burghers fled, afar,
The furies of the Border war;
When the streets of high Dunedin*
Saw lances gleam and falchions redden,
And heard the slogan's† deadly yell—
Then the Chief of Branksome fell.

VIII.

Can piety the discord heal,
Or stanch the death-feud's enmity?
Can Christian lore, can patriot zeal,
Can love of blessed charity?
No! vainly to each holy shrine,
In mutual pilgrimage, they drew;‡
Implored, in vain, the grace divine
For chiefs their own red falchions slew
While Cessford owns the rule of Carr,§
While Ettricke boasts the line of Scott,
The slaughtered chiefs, the mortal jar,
The havoc of the feudal war,
Shall never, never be forgot!

IX.

In sorrow, o'er Lord Walter's bier
The warlike foresters had bent,
And many a flower, and many a tear,
Old Teviot's maids and matrons lent:
But o'er her warrior's bloody bier
The Layde dropped nor flower nor tear!
Vengeance, deep-brooding o'er the slain,
Had locked the source of softer woe;
And burning pride, and high disdain,
Forbade the rising tear to flow;
Until, amid his sorrowing clan,
Her son lisped from the nurse's knee—

David, in 1492. He was a brave and powerful baron, and warden of the west marches of Scotland. A deadly feud broke out betwixt the names of Scott and Kerr; and one of the acts of violence to which it gave rise, was the murder of Sir Walter Scott, of Buccleuch, who was slain by the Kerrs in the streets of Edinburgh, in 1552. This is the event alluded to, and the poem is supposed to open shortly after it had taken place.

*Edinburgh, *i. e. Dun Edin*, or "the hill of Edin."

†The war-cry, or gathering word, of a Border clan.

‡Among other expedients resorted to for stanching the feud betwixt the Scotts and the Kerrs, was a bond executed, in 1529, betwixt the heads of each clan, binding themselves to perform reciprocally the four pilgrimages of Scotland, for the benefit of the souls of those of the opposite name who had fallen in the quarrel. It never took effect, or else the feud broke out anew.

§The family of Ker, Kerr, or Carr, was very powerful on the Border. Cessford Castle, now in ruins, the ancient baronial residence of the family, is situated near the village of Morebattle, within two or three miles of the Cheviot Hills.

"And, if I live to be a man,
My father's death revenged shall be!"
Then fast the mother's tears did seek
To dew the infant's kindling cheek.

X.

All loose her negligent attire,
All loose her golden hair,
Hung Margaret o'er her slaughtered sire,
And wept in wild despair.
But not alone the bitter tear
Had filial grief supplied;
For hopeless love, and anxious fear,
Had lent their mingled tide:
Nor in her mother's altered eye
Dared she to look for sympathy.
Her lover, 'gainst her father's clan,
With Carr in arms had stood,
When Mathouse burn to Melrose ran,
All purple with their blood.
And well she knew, her mother dread,
Before Lord Cranstoun* she should wed,
Would see her on her dying bed.

XI.

Of noble race the Ladye came;
Her father was a clerk of fame,
Of Bethune's† line of Picardie:
He learned the art, that none may name,
In Padua,‡ far beyond the sea.
Men said, he changed his mortal frame
By feat of magic mystery:
For when, in studious mood, he paced
St. Andrew's cloistered hall,
His form no darkening shadow§ traced
Upon the sunny wall!

* The Cranstouns are an ancient border family, whose chief seat was at Crailing, in Teviotdale. They were at this time at feud with the clan of Scott; for it appears that the lady of Buccleuch, in 1557, beset the laird of Cranstoun, seeking his life. Nevertheless, the same Cranstoun, or perhaps his son, was married to a daughter of the same lady.

† The Bethunes were of French origin, and derived their name from a small town in Artois. The family of Bethune, or Beatoun, in Fife, produced three learned and dignified prelates; namely, Cardinal Beaton, and two archbishops of Glasgow, all of whom flourished about the date of this romance. Of this family was descended Dame Janet Beaton, Lady Buccleuch, widow of Sir Walter Scott of Branksome. She was a woman of masculine spirit, as appeared from her riding at the head of her son's clan after her husband's murder.

‡ Padua was long supposed by the Scottish peasants to be the principal school of necromancy.

§ The shadow of a necromancer was supposed to be independent of the sun.

XII.

And of his skill, as bards avow,
He taught that Ladye fair,
Till to her bidding she could bow
The viewless forms of air.*
And now she sits in secret bower,
In old Lord David's western tower,
And listens to a heavy sound,
That moans the mossy turrets round.
Is it the roar of Teviot's tide,
That chafes against the scaur's† red side?
Is it the wind that swings the oaks?
Is it the echo from the rocks?
What may it be, the heavy sound,
That moans old Branksome's turret's round?

XIII.

At the sullen, moaning sound,
The ban-dogs‡ bay and howl;
And, from the turrets round,
Loud whoops the startled owl.
In the hall, both squire and knight
Swore that a storm was near,
And looked forth to view the night;
But the night was still and clear!

XIV.

From the sound of Teviot's tide,
Chafing with the mountain's side,
From the groan of the wind-swung oak,
From the sullen echo of the rock,
From the voice of the coming storm,
The Ladye knew it well!
It was the Spirit of the Flood that spoke,
And he called on the Spirit of the Fell.

XV.

RIVER SPIRIT.

"Sleepest thou, brother?"

MOUNTAIN SPIRIT.

————"Brother, nay—
On my hills the moon-beams play.

* The Scottish vulgar, without having any very definite notion of their attributes, believe in the existence of an intermediate class of spirits residing in the air, or in the waters; to whose agency they ascribe floods, storms, and all such phenomena as their own philosophy cannot readily explain. They are supposed to interfere in the affairs of mortals, sometimes with a malevolent purpose, and sometimes with milder views.

† A precipitous bank of earth.

‡ According to Nares, a dog always kept tied up on account of his fierceness, and with a view to increase that quality in him, which it certainly would do.—*Halliwell, Arch. Dict.*

From Craik-cross to Skelfhill-pen,
By every rill, in every glen,
Merry elves their morrice pacing,
To aërial minstrelsy,
Emerald rings on brown heath tracing,
Trip it deft* and merrily.
Up, and mark their nimble feet!
Up, and list their music sweet!"

XVI.

RIVER SPIRIT.

"Tears of an imprisoned maiden
Mix with my polluted stream;
Margaret of Branksome, sorrow-laden,
Mourns beneath the moon's pale beam.
Tell me, thou, who view'st the stars,
When shall cease these feudal jars?
What shall be the maiden's fate?
Who shall be the maiden's mate?"

XVII.

MOUNTAIN SPIRIT.

"Arthur's slow wain his course doth roll,
In utter darkness round the pole;
The Northern Bear lowers black and grim;
Orion's studded belt is dim;
Twinkling faint, and distant far,
Shimmers† through mist each planet star;
Ill may I read their high decree:
But no kind influence deign they shower
On Teviot's tide, and Branksome's tower,
Till pride be quelled, and love be free."

XVIII.

The unearthly voices ceased,
And the heavy sound was still;
It died on the river's breast,
It died on the side of the hill—
But round Lord David's tower
The sound still floated near;
For it rung in the Ladye's bower,
And it rung in the Ladye's ear.
She raised her stately head,
And her heart throbbed high with pride:—
"Your mountains shall bend,
And your streams ascend,
Ere Margaret be our foeman's bride!"

XIX.

The Ladye sought the lofty hall,
Where many a bold retainer lay,
And, with jocund din, among them all,
Her son pursued his infant play.

* Dexterously. † Shines.

A fancied moss-trooper,* the boy
The truncheon of a spear bestrode,
And round the hall, right merrily,
In mimic foray rode.
Even bearded knights, in arms grown old,
Share in his frolic gambols bore,
Albeit their hearts, of rugged mould,
Were stubborn as the steel they wore.
For the grey warriors prophesied,
How the brave boy, in future war,
Should tame the Unicorn's pride,
Exalt the Crescents and the Star.†

XX.

The Ladye forgot her purpose high,
One moment, and no more;
One moment gazed with a mother's eye,
As she paused at the arched door:
Then, from amid the armed train,
She called to her William of Deloraine.‡

XXI.

A stark moss-trooping Scot was he,
As e'er couched border lance by knee:
Through Solway sands, through Tarras moss,
Blindfold, he knew the paths to cross;
By wily turns, by desperate bounds,
Had baffled Percy's best blood-hounds;§
In Eske, or Liddel, fords were none,
But he would ride them, one by one;
Alike to him was time, or tide,
December's snow, or July's pride;
Alike to him was tide, or time,
Moonless midnight, or matin prime:

* This was the usual appellation of the marauders upon the Border; a profession diligently pursued by the inhabitants of both sides, and by none more actively and successfully than by Buccleuch's clan. Long after the union of the Crowns, the moss-troopers, although sunk in reputation, and no longer enjoying the pretext of national hostility, continued to pursue their calling. They are said to have been called moss-troopers, because dwelling in the mosses, and riding in troops together.

† Alluding to the armorial bearings of the Scotts and Carrs. The arms of the Kerrs, of Cessford, were, *vert* on a chiveron, betwixt three unicorns' heads erased, *argent*, three mollets *sable* crest, a unicorn's head erased *proper*. The Scotts of Buccleuch bore *or* on a bend azure; a star of six points between two crescents of the first.

‡ The lands of Deloraine are adjoining to those of Buccleuch, in Ettricke Forest. They were immemorially possessed by the Buccleuch family under the strong title of occupancy, although no charter was obtained from the crown until 1545. Like other possessions, the lands of Deloraine were occasionally granted by them to vassals, or kinsmen, for border service.

§ The kings and heroes of Scotland, as well as the border-riders, were sometimes obliged to study how to evade the pursuit of blood-hounds.

Steady of heart, and stout of hand,
As ever drove prey from Cumberland;
Five times outlawed had he been,
By England's king and Scotland's queen.

XXII.

"Sir William of Deloraine, good at need,
Mount thee on the wightest steed;
Spare not to spur, nor stint to ride,
Until thou come to fair Tweedside;
And in Melrose's holy pile
Seek thou the Monk of St. Mary's aisle.
Greet the father well from me;
Say, that the fated hour is come,
And to-night he shall watch with thee,
To win the treasure of the tomb:
For this will be St. Michael's night,
And, though stars be dim, the moon is bright;
And the Cross, of bloody red,
Will point to the grave of the mighty dead.

XXIII.

"What he gives thee, see thou keep;
Stay not thou for food or sleep:
Be it scroll, or be it book,
Into it, knight, thou must not look;
If thou readest, thou art lorn!*
Better hadst thou ne'er been born."

XXIV.

"O swiftly can speed my dapple-grey steed,
Which drinks of the Teviot clear;
Ere break of day," the warrior 'gan say,
"Again will I be here:
And safer by none may thy errand be done,
Than, noble dame, by me;
Letter nor line know I never a one,
Wer't my neck-verse† at Hairibee."‡

XXV.

Soon in his saddle sate he fast,
And soon the steep descent he passed,
Soon crossed the sounding barbican,§
And soon the Teviot side he won.
Eastward the wooded path he rode;
Green hazels o'er his basnet nod:
He passed the Peel‖ of Goldiland,
And crossed old Borthwick's roaring strand;

* Lost, undone.
† The beginning of the 51st psalm, *Miserere mei*, &c., anciently read by criminals claiming benefit of clergy.
‡ The place of execution at Carlisle for the border marauders.
§ The defences of the outer gate of a feudal castle.
‖ A border tower.

Dimly he viewed the Moat-hill's mound,*
Where Druid shades still flitted round;
In Hawick twinkled may a light;
Behind him soon they set in night;
And soon he spurred his courser keen
Beneath the tower of Hazeldean.

XXVI.

The clattering hoofs the watchmen mark;—
"Stand, ho! thou courier of the dark."
"For Branksome, ho!" the knight rejoined,
And left the friendly tower behind.
He turned him now from Teviotside,
And, guided by the tinkling rill,
Northward the dark ascent did ride,
And gained the moor at Horseliehill;
Broad on the left before him lay,
For many a mile, the Roman way.†

XXVII.

A moment now he slacked his speed,
A moment breathed his panting steed;
Drew saddle-girth and corslet-band,
And loosened in the sheath his brand.
On Minto-crags‡ the moon-beams glint§
Where Barnhill hewed his bed of flint;
Who flung his outlawed limbs to rest,
Where falcons hang their giddy nest,
'Mid cliffs, from whence his eagle eye
For many a league his prey could spy;
Cliffs, doubling, on their echoes borne,
The terrors of the robber's horn;
Cliffs, which, for many a later year,
The warbling Doric reed shall hear,
When some sad swain shall teach the grove,
Ambition is no cure for love.

XXVIII.

Unchallenged, thence passed Deloraine
To ancient Riddell's‖ fair domain,

* This is a round artificial mount near Hawick, which, from its name, was probably anciently used as a place for assembling a national council of the adjacent tribe. There are many such mounds in Scotland, and they are sometimes, but rarely, of a square form.

† An ancient Roman road crossing through part of Roxburghshire.

‡ A romantic assemblage of cliffs, which rise suddenly above the vale of Teviot, in the immediate vicinity of the family seat, from which Lord Minto takes his title. A small platform on a projecting crag, commanding a most beautiful prospect, is termed *Barnhill's Bed*. This Barnhill is said to have been a robber or outlaw. There are remains of a strong tower beneath the rocks, where he is supposed to have dwelt, and from which he derived his name.

§ Glanced.

‖ The family of Riddell have been very long in possession of the barony called Riddell, or Ryedale, part of which still bears the latter

Where Aill, from mountains freed,
Down from the lakes did raving come;
Each wave was crested with tawny foam,
Like the mane of a chestnut steed.
In vain! no torrent, deep or broad,
Might bar the bold moss-trooper's road.

XXIX.

At the first plunge the horse sunk low,
And the water broke o'er the saddle-bow;
Above the foaming tide, I ween,
Scarce half the charger's neck was seen;
For he was barded* from counter to tail,
And the rider was armed complete in mail;
Never heavier man and horse
Stemm'd a midnight torrent's force.
The warrior's very plume, I say,
Was daggled by the dashing spray;
Yet, through good heart, and our Ladye's grace,
At length he gained the landing-place.

XXX.

Now Bowdon Moor the marchman won,
And sternly shook his plumèd head,
As glanced his eye o'er Halidon;†
For on his soul the slaughter red
Of that unhallowed morn arose,
When first the Scott and Carr were foes;
When royal James beheld the fray,
Prize to the victor of the day;
When Home and Douglas in the van,
Bore down Buccleuch's retiring clan,
Till gallant Cessford's heart-blood dear
Reeked on dark Elliot's Border spear.

XXXI.

In bitter mood he spurrèd fast,
And soon the hated heath was passed;
And far beneath in lustre wan,
Old Melros' rose,‡ and fair Tweed ran:

name. Tradition carries their antiquity to a point extremely remote; and is in some degree sanctioned by the discovery of two stone coffins; one containing an earthen pot filled with ashes and arms, bearing a legible date, A D. 727; the other dated 936, and filled with the bones of a man of gigantic size

* Or barbed, applied to a horse accoutred with defensive armour.

† Halidon Hill, on which the battle of Melrose was fought July 19, 1333. Halidon was an ancient seat of the Kerrs of Cessford, now demolished.

‡ The ancient and beautiful monastery of Melrose was founded by King David I. in 1136. Its ruins afford the finest specimen of Gothic architecture, and Gothic sculpture, of which Scotland can boast. This superb convent was dedicated to St. Mary, and the monks were of the Cistercian order.

Like some tall rock, with linchens grey,
Seemed, dimly huge, the dark Abbaye,
When Hawick* he passed, had curfew rung,
Now midnight lauds† were in Melrose sung.
The sound, upon the fitful gale,
In solemn wise did rise and fail,
Like that wild harp, whose magic tone
Is wakened by the winds alone.
But when Melrose he reached, 'twas silence all;
He meetly stabled his steed in stall,
And sought the convent's lonely wall.

HERE paused the harp; and with its swell
The Master's fire and courage fell:
Dejectedly, and low, he bowed,
And, gazing timid on the crowd,
He seemed to seek, in every eye,
If they approved his minstrelsy;
And, diffident of present praise,
Somewhat he spoke of former days,
And how old age, and wandering long,
Had done his hand and harp some wrong.

The Duchess, and her daughters fair,
And every gentle ladye there,
Each after each, in due degree,
Gave praises to his melody;
His hand was true, his voice was clear,
And much they longed the rest to hear.
Encouraged thus, the Aged Man,
After meet rest, again began.

CANTO SECOND.

I.

IF thou wouldst view fair Melrose aright,
Go visit it by the pale moonlight;
For the gay beams of lightsome day
Gild, but to flout, the ruins grey.
When the broken arches are black in night,
And each shafted oriel glimmers white;
When the cold light's uncertain shower
Streams on the ruined central tower;
When buttress and buttress, alternately,
Seem framed of ebon and ivory;

* This town is beautifully situated at the junction of the Teviot with a stream called the Slitrigg.
† The midnight service of the Roman Catholic Church.

When silver edges the imagery,
And the scrolls that teach thee to live and die;*
When distant Tweed is heard to rave,
And the owlet to hoot o'er the dead man's grave,
Then go—but go alone the while—
Then view St. David's† ruined pile;
And, home returning, soothly swear,
Was never scene so sad and fair!

II.

Short halt did Deloraine make there;
Little recked he of the scene so fair.
With dagger's hilt, on the wicket strong,
He struck full loud, and struck full long.
The porter hurried to the gate—
"Who knocks so loud, and knocks so late?"—
"From Branksome I," the warrior cried;
And straight the wicket opened wide:
For Branksome's chiefs had in battle stood,
To fence the rights of fair Melrose;
And lands and livings, many a rood,
Had gifted the shrine for their souls' repose.‡

III.

Bold Deloraine his errand said;
The porter bent his humble head;
With torch in hand, and feet unshod,
And noiseless step, the path he trod:
The arched cloisters, far and wide,
Rang to the warrior's clanking stride;
Till, stooping low his lofty crest,
He entered the cell of the ancient priest,
And lifted his barred aventayle,§
To hail the Monk of St. Mary's aisle.

IV.

"The Ladye of Branksome greets thee by me;
Says, that the fated hour is come,
And that to-night I shall watch with thee,
To win the treasure of the tomb."—
From sackcloth couch the Monk arose,
With toil his stiffened limbs he reared;
A hundred years had flung their snows
On his thin locks and floating beard.

* The buttresses are, according to the Gothic style, richly carved and fretted, containing niches for the statues of saints, and labelled with scrolls, bearing appropriate texts of Scripture.

† David I. of Scotland purchased the reputation of sanctity by founding and liberally endowing Melrose and other monasteries.

‡ The Buccleuch family were great benefactors to the abbey of Melrose.

§ Visor of the helmet.

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V.

And strangely on the Knight looked he,
And his blue eyes gleamed wild and wide;—
"And, darest thou, warrior! seek to see
What heaven and hell alike would hide?
My breast, in belt of iron pent,
With shirt of hair and scourge of thorn;
For threescore years, in penance spent,
My knees those flinty stones have worn;
Yet all too little to atone
For knowing what should ne'er be known.
Wouldst thou thy every future year
In ceaseless prayer and penance drie,*
Yet wait thy latter end with fear—
Then, daring warrior, follow me."

VI.

"Penance, father, will I none;
Prayer know I hardly one;
For mass or prayer can I rarely tarry,
Save to patter an Ave Mary,
When I ride on a Border foray:
Other prayer can I none;
So speed me my errand, and let me be gone."—

VII.

Again on the Knight looked the Churchman old,
And again he sighed heavily;
For he had himself been a warrior bold,
And fought in Spain and Italy.
And he thought on the days that were long since by,
When his limbs were strong, and his courage was high:—
Now, slow and faint, he led the way,
Where, cloistered round, the garden lay;
The pillared arches were over their head,
And beneath their feet were the bones of the dead.†

VIII.

Spreading herbs, and flowrets bright,
Glistened with the dew of night:
Nor herb, nor flowret, glistened there,
But was carved in the cloister-arches as fair.
The Monk gazed long on the lovely moon,
Then into the night he looked forth;
And red and bright the streamers light
Were dancing in the glowing north.
So had he seen, in fair Castile,‡
The youth in glittering squadrons start;
Sudden the flying jennet wheel,
And hurl the unexpected dart.

* Suffer.
† The cloisters were frequently used as places of sepulture.
‡ The Spaniards were very great adepts in the mode of fighting by hurling darts.

He knew, by the streamers that shot so bright,
That spirits were riding the northern light.

IX.

By a steel-clinched postern door,
They entered now the chancel tall;
The darkened roof rose high aloof
On pillars, lofty, and light, and small;
The key-stone, that locked each ribbed aisle,
Was a fleur-de-lys, or a quatre-feuille;
The corbels* were carved grotesque and grim;
And the pillars, with clustered shafts so trim,
With base and with capital flourished around,
Seemed bundles of lances which garlands had bound.

X.

Full many a scutcheon and banner, riven,
Shook to the cold night-wind of heaven,
Around the screened altar's pale;
And there the dying lamps did burn,
Before thy low and lonely urn,
O gallant Chief of Otterburne,†
And thine, dark Knight of Liddesdale!‡
O fading honours of the dead!
O high ambition, lowly laid!

XI.

The moon on the east oriel shone,§
Through slender shafts of shapely stone,

* The projections from which the arches spring, usually cut in a fantastic face, or mask.

† The famous and desperate battle of Otterburne was fought 15th August, 1388, betwixt Henry Percy, called Hotspur, and James earl of Douglas. Both these renowned champions were at the head of a chosen body of troops, and were rivals in military fame. The issue of the conflict is well known: Percy was made prisoner, and the Scots won the day, dearly purchased by the death of their gallant general, the earl of Douglas, who was slain in the action. He was buried at Melrose, beneath the high altar.

‡ William Douglas, called the knight of Liddesdale, flourished during the reign of David II., and was so distinguished for his valour, that he was called the Flower of Chivalry. Nevertheless, he tarnished his renown by the cruel murder of Sir Alexander Ramsay of Dalhousie, originally his friend and brother in arms. The king had conferred upon Ramsay the sheriffdom of Teviotdale, to which Douglas pretended some claim. In revenge of this preference, the knight of Liddesdale came down upon Ramsay, while he was administering justice at Hawick, seized, and carried him off to his remote and inaccessible castle of Hermitage, where he threw his unfortunate prisoner into a dungeon, and left him to perish of hunger. So weak was the royal authority, that David, though highly incensed at this atrocious murder, found himself obliged to appoint the knight of Liddesdale successor to his victim as sheriff of Teviotdale. He was soon after slain, while hunting in Ettricke Forest, by his own godson and chieftain, William earl of Douglas.

§ It is impossible to conceive a more beautiful specimen of the

By foliaged tracery combined;
Thou wouldst have thought some fairy's hand.
'Twixt poplars straight the osier wand,
In many a freakish knot, had twined;
Then framed a spell, when the work was done,
And changed the willow-wreaths to stone.
The silver light, so pale and faint,
Showed many a prophet, and many a saint,
Whose image on the glass was dyed;
Full in the midst, his Cross of Red
Triumphant Michael brandishèd,
And trampled the Apostate's pride.
The moon-beam kissed the holy pane,
And threw on the pavement a bloody stain.

XII.

They sate them down on a marble stone*
A Scottish monarch slept below;
Thus spoke the Monk in solemn tone:—
"I was not always a man of woe;
For Paynim countries I have trod,
And fought beneath the Cross of God;
Now, strange to my eyes thine arms appear,
And their iron clang sounds strange to my ear.

XIII.

"In these far climes, it was my lot
To meet the wondrous Michael Scott;†
A wizard of such dreaded fame,
That when, in Salamanca's‡ cave,
Him listed his magic wand to wave,
The bells would ring in Notre Dame!
Some of his skill he taught to me;

lightness and elegance of Gothic architecture, when in purity, than the eastern window of Melrose Abbey.

* A large marble stone, in the chancel of Melrose, is pointed out as the monument of Alexander II., one of the greatest of the early kings of Scotland; others say, it is the resting-place of Waldeve, one of the early abbots, who died in the odour of sanctity.

† Sir Michael Scott of Balwearie flourished during the thirteenth century, and was one of the ambassadors sent to bring the fair maid of Norway to Scotland, upon the death of Alexander III., 1290. By a poetical anachronism, he is here placed in a later era. He wrote several works upon the abstruse sciences, and passed among his contemporaries for a skilful magician. His memory survives in many a legend, and in the south of Scotland, any work of great labour and antiquity is ascribed, either to the agency of *Auld Michael*, of Sir William Wallace, or of the devil. Tradition varies as to the place of his burial, but all agree that his books of magic were interred in his grave, or preserved in the convent where he died.

‡ Spain, from the reliques, doubtless, of Arabian learning and superstition, was accounted a favourite residence of magicians. Pope Sylvester, who actually imported from Spain the use of the Arabian numerals, was supposed to have learned in that country the magic for which he was stigmatized by the ignorance of his age.

And, Warrior, I could say to thee
The words that cleft Eildon* hills in three,
And bridled the Tweed with a curb of stone:
But to speak them were a deadly sin;
And for having but thought them my heart within,
A treble penance must be done.

XIV.

"When Michael lay on his dying bed,
His conscience was awakened;
He bethought himself of his sinful deed,
And he gave me a sign to come with speed:
I was in Spain when the morning rose,
But I stood by his bed ere evening close.
The words may not again be said,
That he spoke to me, on death-bed laid;
They would rend this Abbaye's massy nave,
And pile it in heaps above his grave.

XV.

"I swore to bury his Mighty Book,
That never mortal might therein look;
And never to tell where it was hid,
Save at his chief of Branksome's need;
And when that need was past and o'er,
Again the volume to restore.
I buried him on St. Michael's night,
When the bell tolled one and the moon was bright;
And I dug his chamber among the dead,
When the floor of the chancel was stained red.
That his patron's Cross might over him wave,
And scare the fiends from the Wizard's grave.

XVI.

"It was a night of woe and dread,
When Michael in the tomb I laid!
Strange sounds along the chancel passed,
The banners waved without a blast,"—
Still spoke the Monk, when the bell tolled one!—
I tell you, that a braver man
Than William of Deloraine, good at need,
Against a foe ne'er spurred a steed;
Yet somewhat was he chilled with dread,
And his hair did bristle upon his head.

XVII.

"Lo, Warrior! now the Cross of Red
Points to the grave of the mighty dead.

*Michael Scott was, once upon a time, much embarrassed by a spirit, for whom he was under the necessity of finding constant employment. He commanded him to build a *cauld*, or dam-head, across the Tweed at Kelso; it was accomplished in one night. Michael next ordered that Eildon Hill, which was then a uniform

Within it burns a wondrous light,
To chase the spirits that love the night:
That lamp shall burn unquenchably,*
Until the eternal doom shall be."—
Slow moved the Monk to the broad flag-stone,
Which the bloody Cross was traced upon:
He pointed to a secret nook;
An iron bar the warrior took;
And the Monk made a sign with his withered hand,
The grave's huge portal to expand.

XVIII.

With beating heart to the task he went;
His sinewy frame o'er the grave-stone bent;
With bar of iron heaved amain,
Till the toil-drops fell from his brows, like rain.
It was by dint of passing strength,
That he moved the massy stone at length.
I would you had been there, to see
How the light broke forth so gloriously,
Streamed upward to the chancel roof,
And through the galleries far aloof!
No earthly flame blazed e'er so bright:
It shone like heaven's own blessed light,
And, issuing from the tomb,
Showed the Monk's cowl, and visage pale,
Danced on the dark-brow'd Warrior's mail,
And kissed his waving plume.

XIX.

Before their eyes the Wizard lay,
As if he had not been dead a day.
His hoary beard in silver rolled,
He seemed some seventy winters old;
A palmer's amice† wrapped him round,
With a wrought Spanish baldric‡ bound,
Like a pilgrim from beyond the sea:
His left hand held his Book of Might;
A silver cross was in his right;
The lamp was placed beside his knee:
High and majestic was his look,
At which the fellest fiends had shook.

cone, should be divided into three. Another night was sufficient to part its summit into the three picturesque peaks which it now bears.

*Baptista Porta, and other authors who treat of natural magic, talk much of eternal lamps, which they pretend to have been found burning in ancient sepulchres.

† The *amice* or *amite* is the first of the sacerdotal vestments. It is, says Mr. Way, a piece of fine linen, of an oblong square form, which was formerly worn on the head until the priest arrived before the altar, and then thrown back upon the shoulders.—*Halliwell, Arch. Dict.*

‡ A belt, girdle, or sash of various kinds.—*Halliwell.*

And all unruffled was his face:—
They trusted his soul had gotten grace.

XX.

Often had William of Deloraine
Rode through the battle's bloody plain,
And trampled down the warriors slain,
And neither known remorse or awe;
Yet now remorse and awe he owned;
His breath came thick, his head swam round,
When this strange scene of death he saw.
Bewildered and unnerved he stood,
And the priest prayed fervently, and loud:
With eyes averted prayèd he;
He might not endure the sight to see,
Of the man he had loved so brotherly.

XXI.

And when the priest his death-prayer had prayed,
Thus unto Deloraine he said:—
"Now, speed thee what thou hast to do,
Or, Warrior, we may dearly rue;
For those, thou mayst not look upon,
Are gathering fast round the yawning stone!"
Then Deloraine, in terror, took
From the cold hand the Mighty Book,
With iron clasped, and with iron bound:—
He thought, as he took it, the dead man frowned;
But the glare of the sepulchral light,
Perchance, had dazzled the warrior's sight.

XXII.

When the huge stone sunk o'er the tomb,
The night returned in double gloom;
For the moon had gone down, and the stars were few;
And, as the Knight and Priest withdrew,
With wavering steps and dizzy brain,
They hardly might the postern gain.
'Tis said, as through the aisles they passed,
They heard strange noises on the blast;
And through the cloister-galleries small,
Which at mid-height thread the chancel wall;
Loud sobs, and laughter louder ran,
And voices unlike the voice of man;
As if the fiends kept holiday,
Because these spells were brought to-day,
I cannot tell how the truth may be;
I say the tale as 'twas said to me.

XXIII.

"Now, hie thee hence," the Father said,
"And, when we are on death-bed laid,
O may our dear Layde, and sweet St. John,
Forgive our souls for the deed we have done!"—

The monk returned him to his cell,
And many a prayer and penance sped;
When the convent met at the noontide bell—
The monk of St. Mary's aisle was dead!
Before the cross was the body laid,
With hands clasped fast, as if still he prayed.

XXIV.

The Knight breathed free in the morning wind,
And strove his hardihood to find:
He was glad when he passed the tombstones grey,
Which girdle round the fair Abbaye:
For the Mystic Book, to his bosom pressed,
Felt like a load upon his breast;
And his joints, with nerves of iron twined,
Shook, like the aspen leaves in wind.
Full fain was he when the dawn of day
Began to brighten Cheviot grey;
He joyed to see the cheerful light,
And he said Ave Mary, as well as he might.

XXV.

The sun had brightened Cheviot grey,
The sun had brightened the Carter's side;*
And soon beneath the rising day
Smiled Branksome towers and Teviot's tide.
The wild birds told their warbling tale,
And wakened every flower that blows;
And peeped forth the violet pale,
And spread her breast the mountain rose.
And lovelier than the rose so red,
Yet paler than the violet pale,
She early left her sleepless bed,
The fairest maid of Teviotdale.

XXVI.

Why does fair Margaret so early awake,
And don her kirtle so hastilie;
And the silken knots, which in hurry she would make,
Why tremble her slender fingers to tie?
Why does she stop, and look often around,
As she glides down the secret stair?
And why does she pat the shaggy bloodhound,
As he rouses him up from his lair;
And, though she passes the postern alone,
Why is not the watchman's bugle blown?

XXVII.

The Ladye steps in doubt and dread,
Lest her watchful mother hear her tread;
The Ladye caresses the rough bloodhound,
Lest his voice should waken the castle round;

* A mountain on the border of England, above Jedburgh.

The watchman's bugle is not blown,
For he was her foster-father's son;
And she glides through the greenwood at dawn of light,
To meet Baron Henry, her own true knight.

XXVIII.

The Knight and Ladye fair are met,
And under the hawthorn's boughs are set.
A fairer pair were never seen
To meet beneath the hawthorn green.
He was stately, and young, and tall;
Dreaded in battle, and loved in hall:
And she, when love, scarce told, scarce hid,
Lent to her cheek a livelier red;
When the half-sigh her swelling breast
Against the silken riband pressed;
When her blue eyes their secret told,
Though shaded by her locks of gold—
Where would you find the peerless fair,
With Margaret of Branksome might compare!

XXIX.

And now, fair dames, methinks I see
You listen to my minstrelsy;
Your waving locks ye backward throw,
And sidelong bend your necks of snow:—
Ye ween to hear a melting tale,
Of two true lovers in a dale;
And how the Knight, with tender fire,
To paint his faithful passion strove;
Swore he might at her feet expire,
But never, never cease to love;
And how she blushed, and how she sighed,
And, half consenting, half denied,
And said that she would die a maid:—
Yet, might the bloody feud be stayed,
Henry of Cranstoun, and only he,
Margaret of Branksome's choice should be.

XXX.

Alas! fair dames, your hopes are vain!
My harp hast lost the enchanting strain;
Its lightness would my age reprove:
My hairs are grey, my limbs are old,
My heart is dead, my veins are cold:—
I may not, must not, sing of love.

XXXI.

Beneath an oak, mossed o'er by eld,*
The Baron's Dwarf† his courser held,

* Old age.

† The idea of Lord Cranstoun's goblin page is taken from a being called Gilpin Horner, who appeared and made some stay at a farm-house among the Border mountains.

And held his crested helm and spear·
That Dwarf was scarcely an earthly man,
If the tales were true, that of him ran
Through all the Border, far and near.
'Twas said, when the Baron a-hunting rode
Through Reedsdale's glens, but rarely trod,
He heard a voice cry, "Lost! lost! lost!"
And, like tennis-ball by racket tossed,
A leap of thirty feet and three,
Made from the gorse this elfin shape,
Distorted like some dwarfish ape,
And lighted at Lord Cranstoun's knee.
Lord Cranstoun was some whit dismayed;
'Tis said that five good miles he rade,
To rid him of his company;
But where he rode one mile the Dwarf ran four,
And the Dwarf was first at the castle door.

XXXII.

Use lessens marvel, it is said.
This elvish Dwarf with the Baron stayed;
Little he ate, and less he spoke,
Nor mingled with the menial flock;
And oft apart his arms he tossed,
And often muttered, "Lost! lost! lost!"
He was waspish, arch, and litherlie,*
But well Lord Cranstoun servèd he:
And he of his service was full fain;
For once he had been ta'en or slain,
An' it had not been his ministry.
All between Home and Hermitage,
Talked of Lord Cranstoun's Goblin Page.

XXXIII.

For the Baron went on pilgrimage,
And took with him this elvish Page,
To Mary's chapel of the Lowes:
For there, beside our Ladye's lake,†
An offering he had sworn to make,
And he would pay his vows.
But the Ladye of Branksome gathered a band ‡
Of the best that would ride at her command;

*Lazy.

†This beautiful sheet of water lies at the head of the classical Yarrow, and is connected with a smaller one, called the Loch of the Lowes.

‡Upon the 25th of June, 1557, Dame Janet Beatoune Lady Buccleuch, and a great number of the name of Scott, were accused of coming to the kirk of St. Mary of the Lowes, to the number of two hundred persons, arrayed in armour, and breaking open the doors of the said kirk, in order to apprehend the lord of Cranstoun, with a view to his destruction.

The trysting place was Newark Lee.
Wat of Harden* came thither amain,
And thither came John of Thirlestane,
And thither came William of Deloraine;
They were three hundred spears and three.
Through Douglas-burn, up Yarrow stream,
Their horses prance, their lances gleam.
They came to St. Mary's lake ere day;
But the chapel was void, and the Baron away.
They burned the chapel for very rage,
And cursed Lord Cranstoun's Goblin Page.

XXXIV.

And now, in Branksome's good green-wood,
As under the aged oak he stood,
The Baron's courser pricks his ears,
As if a distant noise he hears.
The Dwarf waves his long lean arm on high,
And signs to the lovers to part and fly;
No time was then to vow or sigh.
Fair Margaret, through the hazel grove,
Flew like the startled cushat-dove:†
The Dwarf the stirrup held and rein;
Vaulted the knight on his steed amain,
And, pondering deep that morning's scene,
Rode eastward through the hawthorns green.

WHILE thus he poured the lengthened tale,
The Minstrel's voice began to fail:
Full slyly smiled the observant page,
And gave the withered hand of age
A goblet, crowned with mighty wine,
The blood of Velez' scorchèd vine.
He raised the silver cup on high,
And, while the big drop filled his eye,
Prayed God to bless the Duchess long,
And all who cheered a son of song.
The attending maidens smiled to see,
How long, how deep, how zealously,
The precious juice the Minstrel quaffed;
And he, emboldened by the draught,
Looked gaily back to them, and laughed.
The cordial nectar of the bowl
Swelled his old veins, and cheered his soul;
A lighter, livelier prelude ran,
Ere thus his tale again began.

* Walter Scott of Harden, who flourished during the reign of Queen Mary, was a renowned Border freebooter.
† Wood-pigeon.

CANTO THIRD.

I.

And said I that my limbs were old;
And said I that my blood was cold,
And that my kindly fire was fled,
And my poor withered heart was dead,
  And that I might not sing of love?—
How could I to the dearest theme,
That ever warmed a minstrel's dream,
  So foul, so false, a recreant prove!
How could I name love's very name,
Nor wake my harp to notes of flame!

II.

In peace, Love tunes the shepherd's reed;
In war, he mounts the warrior's steed;
In halls, in gay attire is seen;
In hamlets, dances on the green.
Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,
And men below, and saints above;
For love is heaven, and heaven is love.

III.

So thought Lord Cranstoun, as I ween,
While, pondering deep the tender scene,
He rode through Branksome's hawthorns green.
  But the Page shouted wild and shrill—
    And scarce his helmet could he don,
  When downward from the shady hill
    A stately knight came pricking on.
That warrior's steed, so dapple-grey,
Was dark with sweat, and splashed with clay;
  His armour red with many a stain:
He seemed in such a weary plight,
As if he had ridden the live-long night;
  For it was William of Deloraine.

IV.

But no whit weary did he seem,
When, dancing in the sunny beam,
He marked the crane on the Baron's crest;*
For his ready spear was in his rest.
  Few were the words, and stern and high,
    That marked the foemen's feudal hate;
  For question fierce, and proud reply,
    Gave signal soon of dire debate.

* The crest of the Cranstouns, in allusion to their name, is a crane dormant, holding a stone in his foot, with an emphatic Border motto—"Thou shalt want ere I want."

Their very coursers seemed to know
That each was other's mortal foe;
And snorted fire, when wheeled around,
To give each knight his vantage-ground.

V.

In rapid round the Baron bent;
He sighed a sigh, and prayed a prayer:
The prayer was to his patron saint,
The sigh was to his ladye fair.
Stout Deloraine nor sighed, nor prayed,
Nor saint, nor ladye, called to aid;
But he stooped his head, and couched his spear,
And spurred his steed to full career.
The meeting of these champions proud
Seemed like the bursting thunder-cloud.

VI.

Stern was the dint* the Borderer lent!
The stately Baron backwards bent;
Bent backwards to his horse's tail,
And his plumes went scattering on the gale;
The tough ash spear, so stout and true,
Into a thousand flinders† flew.
But Cranstoun's lance, of more avail,
Pierced through, like silk, the Borderer's mail;
Through shield, and jack,‡ and action,§ passed,
Deep in his bosom broke at last.—
Still sate the warrior saddle-fast,
Till, stumbling in the mortal shock,
Down went the steed, the girthing broke,
Hurled on a heap lay man and horse.
The Baron onward passed his course;
Nor knew—so giddy rolled his brain—
His foe lay stretched upon the plain.

VII.

But when he reined his courser round,
And saw his foeman on the ground
Lie senseless as the bloody clay,
He bade his page to stanch the wound.
And there beside the warrior stay,
And tend him in his doubtful state,
And lead him to Branksome castle-gate:
His noble mind was inly moved
For the kinsman of the maid he loved.
"This shalt thou do without delay;
No longer here myself may stay:

* Stroke. † Pieces.

‡ A coat of mail, or a defensive upper garment quilted with stout leather.

§ A leather jacket sometimes worn under a coat of mail. It was, in fact, a kind of tunic.—*Halliwell, Arch. Dict.*

Unless the swifter I speed away,
Short shrift will be at my dying day."—

VIII.

Away in speed Lord Cranstoun rode,
The Goblin Page behind abode:
His lord's commands he ne'er withstood,
Though small his pleasure to do good.
As the corslet off he took,
The Dwarf espied the Mighty Book!
Much he marvelled, a knight of pride
Like a book-bosomed* priest should ride:
He thought not to search or stanch the wound,
Until the secret he had found.

IX.

The iron band, the iron clasp,
Resisted long the elfin grasp;
For when the first he had undone,
It closed as he the next begun.
Those iron clasps, that iron band,
Would not yield to unchristened hand,
Till he smeared the cover o'er
With the Borderer's curdled gore;
A moment then the volume spread,
And one short spell therein he read.
It had much of glamour† might,
Could make a ladye seem a knight;
The cobwebs on a dungeon wall
Seem tapestry in lordly hall;
A nut-shell seem a gilded barge,
A sheeling‡ seem a palace large,
And youth seem age, and age seem youth—
All was delusion, nought was truth.

X.

He had not read another spell,
When on his cheek a buffet fell,
So fierce, it stretched him on the plain,
Beside the wounded Deloraine.
From the ground he rose dismayed,
And shook his huge and matted head;
One word he muttered, and no more—
"Man of age, thou smitest sore!"
No more the Elfin Page durst try
Into the wondrous Book to pry;

* There is a tradition, that friars were wont to come from Melrose, or Jedburgh, to baptize or marry in the parish of Unthank. As they carried the mass-book in their bosoms, these were called, by the inhabitants, "Book-a-bosomes."

† Glamour in the legends of Scottish superstition, means the magic power of imposing on the eyesight of the spectators, so that the appearance of an object shall be totally different from the reality.

‡ A shepherd's hut.

The clasps, though smeared with Christian gore,
Shut faster than they were before.
He hid it underneath his cloak.—
Now, if you ask who gave the stroke,
I cannot tell, so mot* I thrive;
It was not given by man alive.

XI.

Unwillingly himself he addressed,
To do his master's high behest:
He lifted up the living corse,
And laid it on the weary horse;
He led him into Branksome hall,
Before the beards of the warders all;
And each did after swear and say,
There only passed a wain of hay.
He took him to Lord David's tower,
Even to the Ladye's secret bower;
And, but that stronger spells were spread,
And the door might not be openèd,
He had laid her on her very bed.
Whate'er he did of gramarye,†
Was always done maliciously;
He flung the warrior on the ground,
And the blood welled freshly from the wound.

XII.

As he repassed the outer court,
He spied the fair young child at sport:
He thought to train him to the wood;
For, at a word, be it understood,
He was always for ill, and never for good,
Seemed to the boy some comrade gay,
Led him forth to the woods to play;
On the drawbridge the warders stout
Saw a terrier and lurcher passing out.

XIII.

He led the boy o'er bank and fell,
Until they came to a woodland brook;
The running stream dissolved the spell,‡
And his own elvish shape he took.
Could he have had his pleasure vilde,§
He had crippled the joints of the noble child;
Or, with his fingers long and lean,
Had strangled him in fiendish spleen:
But his awful mother he had in dread,
And also his power was limited;

* May. † Magic.

‡ It is a firm article of popular faith, that no enchantment can subsist in a living stream. Nay, if you can interpose a brook betwixt you and witches, spectres, or even fiends, you are in perfect safety.

§ Vile.

So he but scowled on the startled child,
And darted through the forest wild;
The woodland brook he bounding crossed,
And laughed, and shouted, "Lost! lost! lost!"—

XIV.

Full sore amazed at the wondrous change,
And frightened, as a child might be,
At the wild yell and visage strange,
And the dark words of gramarye,
The child, amidst the forest bower,
Stood rooted like a lilye flower;
And when at length, with trembling pace,
He sought to find where Branksome lay,
He feared to see that grisly face
Glare from some thicket on his way.
Thus, starting oft, he journeyed on,
And deeper in the wood is gone,—
For aye the more he sought his way,
The farther still he went astray,—
Until he heard the mountains round
Ring to the baying of a hound.

XV.

And hark! and hark! the deep-mouthed bay
Comes nigher still, and nigher;
Bursts on the path a dark bloodhound,
His tawny muzzle tracked the ground,
And his red eye shot fire.
Soon as the wildered* child saw he,
He flew at him right furiouslie.
I ween you would have seen with joy
The bearing of the gallant boy,
When, worthy of his noble sire,
His wet cheek glowed 'twixt fear and ire;
He faced the blood-hound manfully,
And held his little bat on high;
So fierce he struck, the dog, afraid,
At cautious distance hoarsely bayed,
But still in act to spring;
When dashed an archer through the glade,
And when he saw the hound was stayed,
He drew his tough bow-string;
But a rough voice cried, "Shoot not, boy!
Ho! shoot not, Edward—'tis a boy!"

XVI.

The speaker issued from the wood,
And checked his fellow's surly mood,
And quelled the ban-dog's ire:
He was an English yeoman good,
And born in Lancashire.

* Bewildered.

Well could he hit a fallow deer
Five hundred feet him fro';
With hand more true, and eye more clear,
No archer bended bow.
His coal-black hair, shorn round and close,
Set off his sun-burnt face;
Old England's sign, St. George's cross,
His barret-cap did grace;
His bugle-horn hung by his side,
All in a wolf-skin baldric tied;
And his short falchion, sharp and clear,
Had pierced the throat of many a deer.

XVII.

His kirtle, made of forest green,
Reached scantly to his knee;
And, at his belt, of arrows keen
A furbished sheaf bore he;*
His buckler scarce in breadth a span,
No longer fence had he;
He never counted him a man
Would strike below the knee;
His slackened bow was in his hand,
And the leash, that was his bloodhound's band.

XVIII.

He would not do the fair child harm,
But held him with his powerful arm,
That he might neither fight nor flee;
For when the Red-Cross spied he,
The boy strove long and violently.
"Now, by St. George," the archer cries,
"Edward, methinks we have a prize!
This boy's fair face, and courage free,
Show he is come of high degree."—

XIX.

"Yes, I am come of high degree,
For I am the heir of bold Buccleuch;
Andif thou dost not set me free,
False Southron, thou shalt dearly rue!
For Walter of Harden shall come with speed,
And William of Deloraine, good at need,
And every Scott from Eske to Tweed;
And, if thou dost not let me go,
Despite thy arrows, and thy bow,
I'll have thee hanged to feed the crow!"—

XX.

"Gramercy, for thy good will, fair boy!
My mind was never set so high;

* Imitated from Drayton's account of Robin Hood and his followers.

But if thou art chief of such a clan,
And art the son of such a man,
And ever comest to thy command,
Our wardens had need to keep good order:
My bow of yew to a hazel wand,
Thou'lt make them work upon the Border.
Meantime, be pleased to come with me,
For good Lord Dacre shalt thou see,
I think our work is well begun,
When we have taken thy father's son."—

XXI.

Although the child was led away,
In Branksome still he seemed to stay,
For so the Dwarf his part did play;
And, in the shape of that young boy,
He wrought the castle much annoy.
The comrades of the young Buccleuch,
He pinched, and beat, and overthrew;
Nay, some of them he well nigh slew.
He tore Dame Maudlin's silken tire;*
And, as Sym Hall stood by the fire,
He lighted the match of his bandelier,†
And woefully scorched the hackbutteer.‡
It may be hardly thought, or said,
The mischief that the urchin made.
Till many of the castle guessed
That the young Baron was possessed!

XXII.

Well I ween, the charm he held
The noble Ladye had soon dispelled;
But she was deeply busied then
To tend the wounded Deloraine.
Much she wondered to find him lie,
On the stone threshold stretched along;
She thought some spirit of the sky
Had done the bold moss-trooper wrong,
Because, despite her precept dread,
Perchance, he in the Book had read;
But the broken lance in his bosom stood,
And it was earthly steel and wood.

XXIII.

She drew the splinter from the wound,
And with a charm she stanched the blood;
She bade the gash be cleansed and bound:
No longer by his couch she stood;
But she has ta'en the broken lance,
And washed it from the clotted gore,
And salved the splinter o'er and o'er.
William of Deloraine, in trance,

*Head-dress. †Belt for carrying ammunition. ‡Muskets.

Whene'er she turned it round and round,
Twisted, as if she galled his wound,
Then to her maidens she did say,
That he should be whole man and sound,
Within the course of a night and day.
Full long she toiled; for she did rue
Mishap to friend so stout and true.

XXIV.

So passed the day—the evening fell,
'Twas near the time of curfew bell;
The air was mild, the wind was calm,
The stream was smooth, the dew was balm,
E'en the rude watchman, on the tower,
Enjoyed and blessed the lovely hour.
Far more fair Margaret loved and blessed
The hour of silence and of rest.
On the high turret sitting lone,
She waked at times the lute's soft tone;
Touched a wild note, and all between
Thought of the bower of hawthorns green.
Her golden hair streamed free from band,
Her fair cheek rested on her hand,
Her blue eyes sought the west afar,
For lovers love the western star.

XXV.

Is yon the star, o'er Penchryst Pen,
That rises slowly to her ken,
And, spreading broad its wavering light,
Shakes its loose tresses on the night?
Is yon red glare the western star?—
O, 'tis the beacon-blaze of war!
Scarce could she draw her tightened breath,
For well she knew the fire of death!

XXVI.

The Warder viewed it blazing strong,
And blew his war-note loud and long,
Till, at the high and haughty sound,
Rock, wood, and river rung around.
The blast alarmed the festal hall,
And startled forth the warriors all;
Far downward, in the castle-yard,
Full many a torch and cresset* glared;
And helms and plumes, confusedly tossed,
Were in the blaze half seen, half lost;
And spears in wild disorder shook,
Like reeds beside a frozen brook.

* An open lamp, suspended on pivots in a kind of fork, and carried upon a pole. It was sometimes a hollow pan filled with combustibles, and indeed, any hollow vessel employed for holding a light, was so called.—*Halliwell, Arch. Dict.*

XXVII.

The Seneschal, whose silver hair
Was reddened by the torches' glare,
Stood, in the midst, with gesture proud,
And issued forth his mandates loud:—
"On Penchryst glows a bale* of fire,
And three are kindling on Priesthaughswire:
Ride out, ride out,
The foe to scout!
Mount, mount for Branksome,† every man!
Thou, Todrig, warn the Johnstone clan,
That ever are true and stout.—
Ye need not send to Liddesdale;
For, when they see the blazing bale,
Elliots and Armstrongs never fail.—
Ride, Alton, ride, for death and life,
And warn the warden of the strife.
Young Gilbert, let our beacon blaze,
Our kin, and clan, and friends, to raise."

XXVIII.

Fair Margaret, from the turret head,
Heard, far below, the coursers' tread,
While loud the harness rung,
As to their seats, with clamour dread,
The ready horsemen sprung;
And trampling hoofs, and iron coats,
And leaders' voices, mingled notes,
And out! and out!
In hasty rout
The horsemen galloped forth;
Dispersing to the south to scout,
And east, and west, and north,
To view their coming enemies,
And warn their vassals and allies.

XXIX.

The ready page, with hurried hand,
Awaked the need-fire's‡ slumbering brand,
And ruddy blushed the heaven:
For a sheet of flame, from the turret high,
Waved like a blood-flag on the sky,
All flaring and uneven.
And soon a score of fires, I ween,
From height, and hill, and cliff, were seen

* A Border beacon. From their number and position they formed a kind of telegraphic communication with Edinburgh. These beacons were "a long and strong tree set up, with a long iron pole across the head of it, and an iron brander fixed on a stalk in the middle of it, for holding a tar-barrel."

† "Mount for Branksome," was the gathering cry of the Scotts.

‡ Beacon.

Each with warlike tidings fraught;
Each from each the signal caught;
Each after each they glanced to sight,
As stars arise upon the night.
They gleamed on many a dusky tarn,*
Haunted by the lonely earn;†
On many a cairn's‡ grey pyramid,
Where urns of mighty chiefs lie hid:
Till high Dunedin the blazes saw,
From Soltra and Dumpender Law;
And Lothian heard the Regent's order,
That all should bowne§ them for the Border.

XXX.

The livelong night in Branksome rang
The ceaseless sound of steel;
The castle-bell, with backward clang,
Sent forth the larum peal;
Was frequent heard the heavy jar
Where massy stone and iron bar
Were piled on echoing keep and tower,
To whelm the foe with deadly shower;
Was frequent heard the changing guard,
And watchword from the sleepless ward;
While, wearied by the endless din,
Blood-hound and ban-dog yelled within.

XXXI.

The noble Dame, amid the broil,
Shared the grey Seneschal's high toil,
And spoke of danger with smile;
Cheered the young knights, and counsel sage
Held with the chiefs of riper age.
No tidings of the foe were brought,
Nor of his numbers knew they aught,
Nor in what time the truce he sought.
Some said, that there were thousands ten;
And others weened that it was nought
But Leven clans, or Tynedale men,
Who came to gather in black mail;‖
And Liddesdale, with small avail,
Might drive them lightly back again.
So passed the anxious night away,
And welcome was the peep of day.

* A mountain lake. † The Scottish eagle.

‡ The cairns, or piles of loose stones, which crown the summit of most of our Scotch hills, and are found in other remarkable situations, seem usually, though not universally, to have been sepulchral monuments. They appear to have been a barbarous imitation of the Roman fashion of sepulture.

§ Make ready.

‖ Protection-money exacted by freebooters.

CEASED the high sound—the listening throng
Applaud the Master of the Song;
And marvel much, in helpless age,
So hard should be his pilgrimage.
Had he no friend—no daughter dear,
His wandering toil to share and cheer;
No son, to be his father's stay,
And guide him on the rugged way?—
"Ay! once he had—but he was dead!"
Upon the harp he stooped his head,
And busied himself the strings withal,
To hide the tear, that fain would fall.
In solemn measure, soft and slow,
Arose a father's notes of woe.

CANTO FOURTH

I.

SWEET Teviot! on thy silver tide
The glaring bale-fires blaze no more;
No longer steel-clad warriors ride
Along thy wild and willowed shore;
Where'er thou wind'st by dale or hill,
All, all is peaceful, all is still,
As if thy waves, since Time was born,
Since first they rolled upon the Tweed,
Had only heard the shepherd's reed,
Nor started at the bugle-horn.

II.

Unlike the tide of human time,
Which, though it change in ceaseless flow,
Retains each grief, retains each crime,
Its earliest course was doomed to know,
And, darker as it downward bears,
Is stained with past and present tears.
Low as that tide has ebbed with me,
It still reflects to memory's eye
The hour, my brave, my only boy,
Fell by the side of great Dundee.*
Why, when the volleying musket played
Against the bloody Highland blade,
Why was not I beside him laid!—
Enough—he died the death of fame;
Enough—he died with conquering Græme.

* The viscount of Dundee, slain in the battle of Killycrankie.

III.

Now over Border dale and fell,
Full wide and far was terror spread;
For pathless marsh, and mountain cell,*
The peasant left his lowly shed.
The frightened flocks and herds were pent
Beneath the peel's rude battlement;
And maids and matrons dropped the tear,
While ready warriors seized the spear.
From Branksome's towers, the watchman's eye
Dun wreaths of distant smoke can spy,
Which, curling in the rising sun,
Showed southern ravage was begun.

IV.

Now loud the heedful gate-ward cried—
"Prepare ye all for blows and blood!
Watt Tinlinn,† from the Liddel-side,
Comes wading through the flood.
Full oft the Tynedale snatchers knock,
At his lone gate, and prove the lock;
It was but last St. Barnabright‡
They sieged him a whole summer night,
But fled at morning; well they knew,
In vain he never twanged the yew.
Right sharp has been the evening shower,
That drove him from his Liddel tower;
And, by my faith," the gate-ward said,
"I think 'twill prove a Warden-Raid."§

V.

While thus he spoke, the bold yeoman
Entered the echoing barbican.
He led a small and shaggy nag,
That through a bog, from hag to hag,‖
Could bound like any Bilhope¶ stag.
It bore his wife and children twain;
A half-clothed serf was all their train:
His wife, stout, ruddy, and dark-browed,
Of silver brooch** and bracelet proud,

* The morasses were the usual refuge of the Border herdsmen, on the approach of an English army. Caves, hollowed out in the most dangerous and inaccessible places, also afforded an occasional retreat.

† The theme of many a fireside tale. He was a retainer of the Buccleuch family, and held for his Border service a small tower on the frontiers of Liddesdale.

‡ The provincial name for St. Barnabas' day, June 11th, which has been celebrated in proverbs and nursery-rhymes under this name, —*Halliwell, Arch. Dict.*

§ An inroad commanded by the warder in person.

‖ The broken ground in a bog.

¶ A place in Liddesdale celebrated for its game.

** As the Borderers were indifferent about the furniture of their

Laughed to her friends among the crowd.
He was of stature passing tall,
But sparely formed, and lean withal:
A battered morion* on his brow;
A leathern jack, as fence enow,
On his broad shoulders loosely hung;
A border-axe behind was slung;
His spear, six Scottish ells in length,
Seemed newly dyed with gore;
His shafts and bow, of wondrous strength,
His hardy partner bore.

VI.

Thus to the Ladye did Tinlinn show
The tidings of the English foe:—
"Belted Will Howard† is marching here,
And hot Lord Dacre,‡ with many a spear.
And all the German§ hagbut men,‖
Who have long lain at Askerten:
They crossed the Liddel at curfew hour.
And burned my little lonely tower;
The fiend receive their souls therefor!
It had not been burned this year and more.
Barn-yard and dwelling, blazing bright,
Served to guide me on my flight;
But I was chased the live-long night.
Black John of Akeshaw, and Fergus Græme
Fast upon my traces came,
Until I turned at Priesthaugh-Scrogg,
And shot their horses in the bog,
Slew Fergus with my lance outright—
I had him long at high despite;
He drove my cows last Fastern's¶ night."

VII.

Now weary scouts from Liddesdale,
Fast hurrying in, confirmed the tale;

habitations, so much exposed to be burned and plundered, they were proportionally anxious to display splendour in decorating and ornamenting their females.

* A conical skull-cap, with a rim round it.—*Halliwell, Arch. Dict.*

† Lord William Howard, third son of Thomas, duke of Norfolk. By a poetical anachronism, he is introduced into the romance a few years earlier than he actually flourished. He was warden of the Western Marches; and, from the rigour with which he repressed the Border excesses, the name of Belted Will Howard is still famous in Border traditions. Naworth Castle was his residence.

‡ The well-known name of Dacre is derived from the exploits of one of their ancestors at the siege of Acre or Ptolemais, under Richard Cœur de Lion. There were two powerful branches of that name.

§ In the wars with Scotland, Henry VIII. and his successors employed numerous bands of mercenary troops.

‖ Musketeers. ¶ Shrove Tuesday.

As far as they could judge by ken,
Three hours would bring to Teviot's strand
Three thousand armèd Englishmen.—
Meanwhile, full many a warlike band,
From Teviot, Aill, and Ettricke shade,
Came in, their Chief's defence to aid.
There was saddling and mounting in haste,
There was pricking o'er moor and lee;
He, that was last at the trysting place,
Was but lightly held of his gay ladye.

VIII.

From fair St. Mary's silver wave;
From dreary Gamescleuch's dusky height,
His ready lances Thirlestane brave *
Arrayed beneath a banner bright.
The tressured fleur-de-luce he claims
To wreathe his shield since royal James,
Encamped by Fala's mossy wave,
The proud distinction grateful gave,
For faith 'mid feudal jars;
What time, save Thirlestane alone,
Of Scotland's stubborn barons none
Would march to southern wars;
And hence, in fair remembrance worn,
Yon sheaf of spears his crest has borne;
Hence his high motto shines revealed,—
"Ready, aye ready," for the field.

IX.

An aged knight, to danger steeled,
With many a moss-trooper came on;
And azure in a golden field,
The stars and crescent graced his shield,
Without the bend of Murdieston.†
Wide lay his lands round Oakwood tower,
And wide round haunted Castle-Ower;
High over Bothwick's mountain flood,
His wood-embosomed mansion stood;

* Sir John Scott of Thirlestane flourished in the reign of James V., and possessed the estates of Thirlestane, Gamescleuch, &c., lying upon the river Ettricke, and extending to St. Mary's Loch, at the head of Yarrow. It appears, that when James had assembled his nobility, and their feudal followers, at Fala, with the purpose of invading England, and was, as is well known, disappointed by the obstinate refusal of his peers, this baron alone declared himself ready to follow the king wherever he should lead. In memory of his fidelity, James granted to his family a charter of arms, entitling them to bear a border of fleurs-de-luce, similar to the tressure in the royal arms, with a bundle of spears for the crest; motto, "Ready, aye ready."

† The family of Harden, before alluded to.

In the dark glen, so deep below,
The herds of plundered England low;
His bold retainers' daily food,
And bought with danger, blows, and blood.
Marauding chief! his sole delight
The moonlight raid, the morning fight:
Not even the Flower of Yarrow's charms,
In youth, might tame his rage for arms;
And still, in age, he spurned at rest,
And still his brows the helmet pressed,
Albeit the blanchèd locks below
Were white as Dinlay's spotless snow:
Five stately warriors drew the sword
Before their father's band;
A braver knight than Harden's lord
Ne'er belted on a brand.

X.

Scotts of Eskdale, a stalwart band,*
Came trooping down the Todshaw hill;
By the sword they won their land,
And by the sword they hold it still.
Hearken, Ladye, to the tale,
How thy sires won fair Eskdale.—
Earl Morton was lord of that valley fair,
The Beattisons were his vassals there.
The Earl was gentle, and mild of mood,
The vassals were warlike, and fierce, and rude;
High of heart, and haughty of word,
Little they recked of a tame liege-lord.
The Earl to fair Eskdale came,
Homage and seignory to claim:
Of Gilbert the Galliard, a heriot† he sought,
Saying, "Give thy best steed, as a vassal ought."—
"Dear to me is my bonny white steed,
Oft has he helped me at pinch of need;
Lord and Earl though thou be, I trow,
I can rein Bucksfoot better than thou."
Word on word gave fuel to fire,
Till so highly blazed the Beattison's ire,

* In this, and the following stanzas, some account is given of the mode in which the property of the valley of Eske was transferred from the Beattisons, its ancient possessors, to the name of Scott. It is needless to repeat the circumstances, which are given in the poem, literally as they have been preserved by tradition. Lord Maxwell, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, took upon himself the title of earl of Morton. The descendants of Beattison of Woodkerrick, who aided the earl to escape from his disobedient vassals, continued to hold these lands within the memory of man, and were the only Beattisons who had property in the dale. The old people give locality to the story by showing the Galliard's Haugh, the place where Buccleuch's men were left, &c.

† The feudal superior, in certain cases, was entitled to the best horse of the vassal, in name of Heriot, or Herezeld.

But that the Earl the flight had ta'en,
The vassals there their lord had slain
Sore he plied both whip and spur,
As he urged his steed through Eskdale muir;
And it fell down a weary weight,
Just on the threshold of Branksome gate.

XI.

The Earl was a wrathful man to see!
Full fain avenged would he be.
In haste to Branksome's Lord he spoke,
Saying, "Take these traitors to thy yoke
For a cast of hawks, and a purse of gold,
All Eskdale I'll sell thee, to have and hold:
Beshrew thy heart, of the Beattisons' clan,
If thou leavest on Eske a landed man!
But spare Woodkerrick's lands alone,
For he lent me his horse to escape upon."—
A glad man then was Branksome bold,
Down he flung him the purse of gold;
To Eskdale soon he spurred amain,
And with him five hundred riders has ta'en.
He left his merry men in the mist of the hill,
And bade them hold them close and still;
And alone he wended to the plain,
To meet with the Galliard and all his train.
To Gilbert the Galliard thus he said:—
"Know thou me for thy liege-lord and head;
Deal not with me as with Morton tame,
For Scotts play best at the roughest game.
Give me in peace my heriot due,
Thy bonny white steed, or thou shalt rue.
If my horn I three times wind,
Eskdale shall long have the sound in mind."—

XII.

Loudly the Beattison laughed in scorn:—
"Little care we for thy winded horn.
Ne'er shall it be the Galliard's lot,
To yield his steed to a haughty Scott.
Wend thou to Branksome back on foot,
With rusty spur and miry boot."—
He blew his bugle so loud and hoarse,
That the dun deer started at fair Craikcross;
He blew again so loud and clear,
Through the grey mountain-mist there did lances appear;
And the third blast rang with such a din,
That the echoes answered from Pentoun-linn,
And all his riders came lightly in.
Then had you seen a gallant shock,
When saddles were emptied, and lances broke!
For each scornful word the Galliard had said,
A Beattison on the field was laid.

His own good sword the chieftain drew,
And he bore the Galliard through and through;
Where the Beattisons' blood mixed with the rill,
The Galliard's Haugh men call it still.
The Scotts have scattered the Beattison clan,
In Eskdale they left but one landed man.
The valley of Eske, from the mouth to the source,
Was lost and won for that bonny white horse.

XIII.

Whitslade the Hawk, and Headshaw came,
And warriors more than I may name;
From Yarrow-cleuch* to Hindhaugh-swair,
From Woodhouselie to Chester-glen,
Trooped man and horse, and bow and spear;
Their gathering word was "Bellenden!"†
And better hearts o'er Border sod
To siege or rescue never rode.
The Ladye marked the aids come in,
And high her heart of pride arose:
She bade her youthful son attend,
That he might know his father's friend,
And learn to face his foes.
"The boy is ripe to look on war;
I saw him draw a cross-bow stiff,
And his true arrow struck afar
The raven's nest upon the cliff;
The Red Cross, on a southern breast,
Is broader than the raven's nest;
Thou, Whitslade, shall teach him his weapon to wield,
And o'er him hold his father's shield."—

XIV.

Well may you think, the wily Page
Cared not to face the Ladye sage.
He counterfeited childish fear,
And shrieked, and shed full many a tear,
And moaned and plained in manner wild.
The attendants to the Ladye told,
Some fairy, sure, had changed the child,
That wont to be so free and bold.
Then wrathful was the noble dame;
She blushed blood-red for very shame:—
"Hence! ere the clan his faintness view;
Hence with the weakling to Buccleuch!—
Watt Tinlinn, thou shalt be his guide
To Rangleburn's lonely side.—
Sure some fell fiend has cursed our line,
That coward should e'er be son of mine!"

* A cleuch is a rugged ascent.

† Bellenden is situated near the head of Borthwick Water, and, being in the centre of the possessions of the Scotts, was frequently used as their place of rendezvous and as a gathering-word.

XV.

A heavy task Watt Tinlinn had,
To guide the counterfeited lad.
Soon as his palfrey felt the weight
Of that ill-omened elvish freight,
He bolted, sprung, and reared amain,
Nor heeded bit, nor curb, nor rein.
It cost Watt Tinlinn mickle toil
To drive him but a Scottish mile;
But, as a shallow brook they crossed,
The elf, amid the running stream,
His figure changed, like form in dream,
And fled, and shouted, "Lost! lost! lost!"
Full fast the urchin ran and laughed,
But faster still a cloth-yard shaft
Whistled from startled Tinlinn's yew,
And pierced his shoulder through and through.
Although the imp might not be slain,
And though the wound soon healed again,
Yet, as he ran, he yelled for pain;
And Watt of Tinlinn, much aghast,
Rode back to Branksome fiery fast.

XVI.

Soon on the hill's steep verge he stood,
That looks o'er Branksome's towers and wood;
And martial murmurs, from below,
Proclaimed the approaching southern foe.
Through the dark wood, in mingled tone,
Were Border-pipes and bugles blown;
The coursers' neighing he could ken,
And measured tread of marching men;
While broke at times the solemn hum,
The Almayn's sullen kettle-drum:
And banners tall, of crimson sheen,
Above the copse appear;
And glistening through the hawthorns green,
Shine helm, and shield, and spear.

XVII.

Light forayers first, to view the ground,
Spurred their fleet coursers loosely round;
Behind, in close array, and fast,
The Kendal archers, all in green,
Obedient to the bugle blast,
Advancing from the wood are seen,
To back and guard the archer band,
Lord Dacre's bill-men were at hand;
A hardy race, on Irthing bred,
With kirtles white, and crosses red,
Arrayed beneath the banner tall,
That streamed o'er Acre's conquered wall;

And minstrels, as they marched in order,
Played, "Noble Lord Dacre, he dwells on the Border."

XVIII.

Behind the English bill and bow,
The mercenaries, firm and slow,
Moved on to fight, in dark array,
By Conrad led of Wolfenstein,
Who brought the band from distant Rhine,
And sold their blood for foreign pay.
The camp their home, their law the sword,
They knew no country, owned no lord:
They were not armed like England's sons,
But bore the levin-darting guns;
Buff-coats, all frounced* and 'broidered o'er,
And morsing-horns† and scarfs they wore;
Each better knee was bared, to aid
The warriors in the escalade;
All, as they marched, in rugged tongue
Songs of Teutonic feuds they sung.

XIX.

But louder still the clamour grew,
And louder still the minstrels blew,
When, from beneath the greenwood tree,
Rode forth Lord Howard's chivalry;
His men-at-arms, with glaive and spear,
Brought up the battle's glittering rear.
There many a youthful knight, full keen
To gain his spurs, in arms was seen,
With favour in his crest, or glove,
Memorial of his layde-love.
So rode they forth in fair array,
Till full their lengthened lines display;
Then called a halt and made a stand,
And cried, "St. George, for merry England!"—

XX.

Now every English eye, intent,
On Branksome's armèd towers was bent.
So near they were, that they might know
The straining harsh of each cross-bow;
On battlement and bartizan‡
Gleamed axe, and spear, and partizan;
Falcon and culver,§ on each tower,
Stood prompt their deadly hail to shower;
And flashing armour frequent broke
From eddying whirls of sable smoke,

* Twisted. † Powder-flasks.

‡ The small overhanging turrets which projected from the angles on the top of a tower, or from the parapet or other parts of a building.—*Halliwell, Arch. Dict.*

§ Ancient pieces of artillery.

Where, upon tower and turret head,
The seething pitch and molten lead
Reeked, like a witch's caldron red.
While yet they gaze, the bridges fall,
The wicket opes, and from the wall
Rides forth the hoary Seneschal.

XXI.

Armed he rode, all save the head,
His white beard o'er his breast-plate spread;
Unbroke by age, erect his seat,
He ruled his eager courser's gait;
Forced him, with chastened fire, to prance,
And, high curvetting, slow advance:
In sign of truce, his better hand
Displayed a peelèd willow wand;
His squire, attending in the rear,
Bore high a gauntlet on a spear.*
When they espied him riding out,
Lord Howard and Lord Dacre stout
Sped to the front of their array,
To hear what this old knight should say.

XXII.

"Ye English warden lords, of you
Demands the Ladye of Buccleuch,
Why, 'gainst the truce of Border-tide,
In hostile guise ye dare to ride,
With Kendal bow, and Gilsland brand,
And all yon mercenary band,
Upon the bounds of fair Scotland?
My Ladye reads you swith† return;
And, if but one poor straw you burn,
Or do our towers so much molest,
As scare one swallow from her nest,—
St. Mary! but we'll light a brand,
Shall warm your hearths in Cumberland."—

XXIII.

A wrathful man was Dacre's lord,
But calmer Howard took the word:—
"May't please thy Dame, Sir Seneschal,
To seek the castle's outward wall;
Our pursuivant-at-arms shall show,
Both why we came, and when we go."—
The message sped, the noble Dame
To the walls' outward circle came;

* A glove upon a lance was the emblem of faith among the ancient Borderers, who were wont, when any one broke his word, to expose this emblem, and proclaim him a faithless villain at the first Border meeting. This ceremony was much dreaded.—See *Leslie*.

† Immediately.

Each chief around leaned on his spear,
To see the pursuivant appear.
All in Lord Howard's livery dressed,
The lion argent decked his breast;
He led a boy of blooming hue—
O sight to meet a mother's view!
It was the heir of great Buccleuch.
Obeisance meet the herald made,
And thus his master's will he said:—

XXIV.

"It irks, high Dame, my noble Lords,
'Gainst ladye fair to draw their swords;
But yet they may not tamely see,
All through the western wardenry,
Your law-contemning kinsmen ride,
And burn and spoil the Border-side;
And ill beseems your rank and birth
To make your towers a flemens-firth.*
We claim from thee William of Deloraine,
That he may suffer march-treason pain:†
It was but last St. Cuthbert's‡ even
He pricked to Stapleton on Leven,
Harried§ the lands of Richard Musgrave,
And slew his brother by dint of glaive.
Then, since a lone and widowed Dame
These restless riders may not tame,
Either receive within thy towers
Two hundred of my master's powers,
Or straight they sound their warison,‖
And storm and spoil thy garrison,
And this fair boy, to London led,
Shall good King Edward's page be bred."

XXV.

He ceased—and loud the boy did cry,
And stretched his little arms on high;
Implored for aid each well-known face,
And strove to seek the Dame's embrace.
A moment changed that Ladye's cheer,
Gushed to her eye the unbidden tear;
She gazed upon the leaders round,
And dark and sad each warrior frowned;
Then, deep within her sobbing breast
She locked the struggling sigh to rest;

* An asylum for outlaws.
† Several species of offences, peculiar to the Border, constituted what was called march-treason. Among others, was the crime of riding, or causing to ride, against the opposite country during the time of truce.
‡ A saint well known in Scotland and in the north of England.
§ Plundered. ‖ Note of assault.

Unaltered and collected stood,
And thus replied, in dauntless mood:—

XXVI.

"Say to your Lords of high emprize*
Who war on woman and on boys,
That either William of Deloraine
Will cleanse him, by oath, of march-treason stain,†
Or else he will the combat take
'Gainst Musgrave, for his honour's sake.
No knight in Cumberland so good,
But William may count with him kin and blood.
Knighthood he took of Douglas' sword,‡
When English blood swelled Ancram ford;§
And but that Lord Dacre's steed was wight,
And bare him ably in the flight,
Himself had seen him dubbed a knight.
For the young heir of Branksome's line,
God be his aid, and God be mine!
Through me no friend shall meet his doom;
Here, while I live, no foe finds room.
Then, if thy Lords their purpose urge,
Take our defiance loud and high;
Our slogan is their lyke-wake‖ dirge,
Our moat the grave where they shall lie."—

XXVII.

Proud she looked round, applause to claim—
Then lightened Thirlestane's eye of flame;
His bugle Watt of Harden blew:
Pensils¶ and pennons wide were flung,
To heaven the Border slogan rung,
"St. Mary for the young Buccleuch!"—
The English war-cry answered wide,
And forward bent each southern spear;
Each Kendal archer made a stride,
And drew the bowstring to his ear:
Each minstrel's war-note loud was blown;—
But, ere a grey-goose shaft had flown
A horseman galloped from the rear.

*Enterprise.

† In dubious cases, the innocence of Border criminals was occasionally referred to their own oath.

‡ The dignity of knighthood, according to the original institution, had this peculiarity, that it did not flow from the monarch, but could be conferred by one who himself possessed it, upon any squire who, after due probation, was found to merit the honour of chivalry. Latterly this power was confined to generals, who were wont to create knights bannerets after or before an engagement.

§ The battle of Ancram Moor, or Peniel-heuch, was fought A.D. 1545.

‖ The ceremony of watching a corpse previous to interment.

¶ Small banners.

XXVIII.

"Ah! noble Lords!" he, breathless, said,
"What treason has your march betrayed?
What make you here, from aid so far,
Before you walls, around you war?
Your foemen triumph in the thought,
That in the toils the lion 's caught.
Already on dark Ruberslaw
The Douglas holds his weapon-schaw;*
The lances, waving in his train,
Clothe the dun heath like autumn grain;
And on the Liddel's northern strand,
To bar retreat to Cumberland,
Lord Maxwell ranks his merry-men good
Beneath the eagle and the rood;
And Jedwood, Eske, and Teviotdale,
Have to proud Angus come;
And all the Merse and Lauderdale
Have risen with haughty Home.
An exile from Northumberland,
In Liddesdale I've wandered long;
But still my heart was with merry England,
And cannot brook my country's wrong;
And hard I've spurred all night, to show
The mustering of the coming foe."—

XXIX.

"And let them come!" fierce Dacre cried;
"For soon yon crest, my father's pride,
That swept the shores of Judah's sea,
And waved in gales of Galilee,
From Branksome's highest towers displayed
Shall mock the rescue's lingering aid!—
Level each harquebuss† on row;
Draw, merry archers, draw the bow;
Up, bill-men, to the walls, and cry,
Dacre for England, win or die!"—

XXX.

"Yet hear," quoth Howard, "calmly hear,
Nor deem my words the words of fear:
For who, in field or foray slack,
Saw the blanche lion‡ e'er fall back?
But thus to risque our Border flower
In strife against a kingdom's power,
Ten thousand Scots 'gainst thousands three,
Certes, were desperate policy.

* The military array of a county.
† A sort of hand gun.
‡ This was the cognizance of the noble house of Howard in all its branches. The crest, or bearing, of a warrior, was often used as a *nomme-de-guerre*. Thus Richard III. acquired his well-known epithet, the "Boar of York."

Nay, take the terms the Layde made,
Ere conscious of the advancing aid:
Let Musgrave meet fierce Deloraine*
In single fight; and if he gain,
He gains for us; but if he's crossed,
'Tis but a single warrior lost:
The rest, retreating as they came,
Avoid defeat, and death, and shame."—

XXXI.

Ill could the haughty Dacre brook
His brother-warden's sage rebuke;
And yet his forward step he stayed,
And slow and sullenly obeyed.
But ne'er again the Border-side
Did these two lords in friendship ride;
And this slight discontent, men say,
Cost blood upon another day.

XXXII.

The pursuivant-at-arms again
Before the castle took his stand;
His trumpet called, with parleying strain,
The leaders of the Scottish band;
And he defied, in Musgrave's right,
Stout Deloraine to single fight;
A gauntlet at their feet he laid,
And thus the terms of fight he said:—
"If in the lists good Musgrave's sword
Vanquished the knight of Deloraine,
Your youthful chieftain, Branksome's lord,
Shall hostage for his clan remain:
If Deloraine foil good Musgrave,
The boy his liberty shall have.
Howe'er it falls, the English band,
Unharming Scots, by Scots unharmed,
In peaceful march like men unarmed,
Shall straight retreat to Cumberland."—

XXXIII.

Unconscious of the near relief,
The proffer pleased each Scottish chief,
Though much the Layde sage gainsayed;
For though their hearts were brave and true,
From Jedwood's recent sack they knew,
How tardy was the regent's aid;
And you may guess the noble Dame
Durst not the secret prescience own,
Sprung from the art she might not name,
By which the coming help was known.

* It may easily be supposed, that trial by single combat, so peculiar to the feudal system, was common on the Borders.

Closed was the compact, and agreed
That lists should be enclosed with speed,
Beneath the castle on a lawn:
They fixed the morrow for the strife;
On foot, with Scottish axe and knife,
At the fourth hour from peep of dawn;
When Deloraine, from sickness freed,
Or else a champion in his stead,
Should for himself and chieftain stand,
Against stout Musgrave, hand to hand.

XXXIV.

I know right well, that, in their lay,
Full many minstrels sing and say,
Such combat should be made on horse;
On foaming steed, in full career,
With brand to aid, when as the spear
Should shiver in the course:
But he, the jovial Harper,* taught
Me, yet a youth, how it was fought,
In guise which now I say;
He knew each ordinance and clause
Of black Lord Archibald's† battle laws
In the old Douglas' day.
He brooked not, he, that scoffing tongue
Should tax his minstrelsy with wrong,
Or call his song untrue;
For this, when they the goblet plied,
And such rude taunt had chafed his pride,
The bard of Reull he slew.
On Teviot's side, in fight, they stood,
And tuneful hands were stained with blood;
Where still the thorn's white branches wave,
Memorial o'er his rival's grave.

XXXV.

Why should I tell the rigid doom,
That dragged my master to his tomb;

* The person here alluded to is an ancient Border minstrel, called Rattling Roaring Willie. This *sobriquet* was probably derived from his bullying disposition; being, it would seem, such a roaring boy, as is frequently mentioned in old plays. While drinking at Newmill, upon Teviot, about five miles above Hawick, Willie chanced to quarrel with one of his own profession, who was usually distinguished by the odd name of Sweet Milk, from a place so called. They retired to a meadow, on the opposite side of the Teviot, to decide the contest with their swords, and Sweet Milk was killed on the spot. A thorn-tree marks the scene of the murder, which is still called Sweet Milk Thorn. Willie was taken and executed at Jedburgh, bequeathing his name to the beautiful Scotch air, called "Rattling Roaring Willie."

† The title to the most ancient collection of Border regulations.

How Ousenam's maidens tore their hair,
Wept till their eyes were dead and dim,
And wrung their hands for love of him,
Who died at Jedwood Air?
He died!—his scholars, one by one,
To the cold silent grave are gone;
And I, alas! survive alone,
To muse o'er rivalries of yore,
And grieve that I shall hear no more
The strains, with envy heard before;
For, with my minstrel brethren fled,
My jealousy of song is dead.

He paused: the listening dames again
Applaud the hoary Minstrel's strain;
With many a word of kindly cheer,—
In pity half, and half sincere,—
Marvelled the Duchess how so well
His legendary song could tell—
Of ancient deeds, so long forgot;
Of feuds, whose memory was not;
Of forests, now laid waste and bare;
Of towers, which harbour now the hare;
Of manners, long since changed and gone;
Of chiefs, who under their grey stone
So long had slept, that fickle Fame
Had blotted from her rolls their name,
And twined round some new minion's head
The fading wreath for which they bled;
In sooth, 'twas strange, this old man's verse
Could call them from their marble hearse.

The Harper smiled, well pleased; for ne'er
Was flattery lost on poet's ear:
A simple race! they waste their toil
For the vain tribute of a smile;
E'en when in age their flame expires,
Her dulcet breath can fan its fires:
Their drooping fancy wakes at praise,
And strives to trim the short-lived blaze.

Smiled then, well-pleased, the Aged Man,
And thus his tale continued ran.

CANTO FIFTH.

I.

CALL it not vain:—they do not err
Who say, that, when the Poet dies,
Mute Nature mourns her worshipper,
And celebrates his obsequies;
Who say tall cliff, and cavern lone,
For the departed bard make moan;
That mountains weep in crystal rill;
That flowers in tears of balm distil;
Through his loved groves that breezes sigh,
And oaks, in deeper groan, reply;
And rivers teach their rushing wave
To murmur dirges round his grave.

II.

Not that, in sooth, o'er mortal urn
Those things inanimate can mourn;
But that the stream, the wood, the gale,
Is vocal with the plaintive wail
Of those, who, else forgotten long,
Lived in the poet's faithful song,
And, with the poet's parting breath,
Whose memory feels a second death.
The maid's pale shade, who wails her lot,
That love, true love, should be forgot,
From rose and hawthorn shakes the tear
Upon the gentle minstrel's bier:
The Phantom Knight, his glory fled,
Mourns o'er the fields he heaped with dead;
Mounts the wild blast that sweeps amain,
And shrieks along the battle-plain:
The chief, whose antique crownlet long
Still sparkled in the feudal song,
Now from the mountain's misty throne,
Sees, in the thanedom once his own,
His ashes undistinguished lie,
His place, his power, his memory die:
His groans the lonely caverns fill,
His tears of rage impel the rill;
All mourn the minstrel's harp unstrung,
Their name unknown, their praise unsung.

III.

Scarcely the hot assault was stayed,
The terms of truce were scarcely made,
When they could spy, from Branksome's towers,
The advancing march of martial powers:

Thick clouds of dust afar appeared,
And trampling steeds were faintly heard;
Bright spears,* above the columns dun,
Glanced momentary to the sun;
And feudal banners fair displayed
The bands that moved to Branksome's aid.

IV.

Vails† not to tell each hardy clan,
From the fair Middle Marches came;
The Bloody Heart blazed in the van,
Announcing Douglas'‡ dreaded name!
Vails not to tell what steeds did spurn,§
Where the Seven Spears of Wedderburne‖
Their men in battle-order set;
And Swinton laid the lance in rest,
That tamed of yore the sparkling crest
Of Clarence's Plantagenet.¶
Nor list I say, what hundreds more,
From the rich Merse and Lammermore,
And Tweed's fair borders, to the war,
Beneath the crest of old Dunbar,
And Hepburn's mingled banners come,
Down the steep mountain glittering far,
And shouting still, "a Home! a Home!" **

* First edition, "spear-heads." † It avails.

‡ The chief of this potent race of heroes, about the date of the poem, was Archibald Douglas, seventh earl of Angus, a man of great courage and activity. The Bloody Heart was the well-known cognizance of the house of Douglas, assumed from the time of good Lord James, to whose care Robert Bruce committed his heart, to be carried to the Holy Land.

§ In first edition—

"Vails not to tell what hundreds more,
From the rich Merse and Lammermore," &c.

‖ Sir David Home of Wedderburne, who was slain in the fatal battle of Flodden Field, left seven sons. They were called the Seven Spears of Wedderburne.

¶ At the battle of Beaugé, in France, Thomas, duke of Clarence, brother to Henry V., was unhorsed by Sir John Swinton of Swinton, who distinguished him by a coronet set with precious stones, which he wore around his helmet. The family of Swinton is one of the most ancient in Scotland, and produced many celebrated warriors.

** The earls of Home, as descendants of the Dunbars, ancient earls of March, carried a lion rampant, *argent;* but, as a difference, changed the colour of the shield from *gules* to *vert*, in allusion to Greenlaw, their ancient possession. The slogan, or war-cry, of this powerful family was, "a Home! a Home!" It was anciently placed in an escrol above the crest. The helmet is armed with a lion's head erased *gules*, with a cap of state *gules*, turned up *ermine*.

The Hepburns, a powerful family in East Lothian, were usually in close alliance with the Homes. The chief of this clan was Hepburn, lord of Hailes; a family which terminated in the too famous earl of Bothwell.

V.

Now squire and knight, from Branksome sent,
On many a courteous message went;
To every chief and lord they paid
Meet thanks for prompt and powerful aid;
And told them,—how a truce was made,
And how a day of fight was ta'en
'Twixt Musgrave and stout Deloraine;
And how the Ladye prayed them dear,
That all would stay the fight to see.
And deign, in love and courtesy,
To taste of Branksome cheer.
Nor, while they bade to feast each Scot,
Were England's noble Lords forgot;
Himself, the hoary Seneschal,
Rode forth, in seemly terms to call
Those gallant foes to Branksome Hall.
Accepted Howard, than whom knight
Was never dubbed, more bold in fight,
Nor, when from war and armour free,
More famed for stately courtesy:
But angry Dacre rather chose
In his pavilion to repose.

VI.

Now, noble Dame, perchance you ask,
How these two hostile armies met?
Deeming it were no easy task
To keep the truce which here was set;
Where martial spirits, all on fire,
Breathed only blood and mortal ire.—
By mutual inroads, mutual blows,
By habit, and by nation, foes,
They met on Teviot's strand:
They met, and sate them mingled down,
Without a threat, without a frown,
As brothers meet in foreign land:
The hands, the spear that lately grasped,
Still in the mailed gauntlet clasped,
Were interchanged in greeting dear;
Visors were raised, and faces shown,
And many a friend to friend made known,
Partook of social cheer.
Some drove the jolly bowl about;
With dice and draughts some chased the day;
And some, with many a merry shout,
In riot, revelry, and rout,
Pursued the foot-ball play.*

* This was anciently a very favourite sport all through Scotland, but especially upon the Borders.

VII.

Yet be it known, had bugles blown,
Or sign of war been seen,
Those bands, so fair together ranged,
Those hands, so frankly interchanged,
Had dyed with gore the green:
The merry-shout by Teviot-side
Had sunk in war-cries wild and wide,
And in the groan of death;
And whingers,* now in friendship bare,
The social meal to part and share,
Had found a bloody sheath.
'Twixt truce and war, such sudden change
Was not unfrequent, nor held strange,
In the old Border-day;†
But yet on Branksome's towers and town,
In peaceful merriment, sunk down
The sun's declining ray.

VIII.

The blithesome signs of wassel gay
Decayed not with the dying day;
Soon through the latticed windows tall,
Of lofty Branksome's lordly hall,
Divided square by shafts of stone,
Huge flakes of ruddy lustre shone;
Nor less the gilded rafters rang
With merry harp and beakers' clang;
And frequent, on the darkening plain,
Loud hollo, whoop, or whistle ran,
As bands, their straggling to regain,
Give the shrill watch-word of their clan;‡
And revellers, o'er their bowls, proclaim
Douglas or Dacre's conquering name.

IX.

Less frequent heard, and fainter still,
At length the various clamours died;
And you might hear, from Branksome-hill,
No sound but Teviot's rushing tide;

* A sort of knife, or poniard.

† Notwithstanding the constant wars upon the Borders, and the occasional cruelties which marked the mutual inroads, the inhabitants on either side do not appear to have regarded each other with that violent and personal animosity which might have been expected. On the contrary, like the outposts of hostile armies, they often carried on something resembling friendly intercourse, even in the middle of hostilities; and it is evident, from various ordinances against trade and intermarriages between English and Scottish Borderers, that the governments of both countries were jealous of their cherishing too intimate a connection.

‡ Patten remarks, with bitter censure, the disorderly conduct of the English Borderers, who attended the Protector Somerset on his expedition against Scotland.

Save, when the changing sentinel
The challenge of his watch could tell;
And save, where, through the dark profound,
The clanging axe and hammer's sound
Rung from the nether lawn;
For many a busy hand toiled there,
Strong pales to shape, and beams to square,*
The lists' dread barriers to prepare,
Against the morrow's dawn.

X.

Margaret from hall did soon retreat,
Despite the Dame's reproving eye,
Nor marked she, as she left her seat,
Full many a stifled sigh:
For many a noble warrior strove
To win the Flower of Teviot's love,
And many a bold ally.—
With throbbing head and anxious heart,
All in her lonely bower apart,
In broken sleep she lay:
Betimes, from silken couch she rose;
While yet the bannered hosts repose,
She viewed the dawning day:
Of all the hundreds sunk to rest,
First woke the loveliest and the best.

XI.

She gazed upon the inner court,
Which in the tower's tall shadow lay;
Where coursers' clang, and stamp, and snort,
Had rung the live-long yesterday;
Now still as death; till, stalking slow,—
The jingling spurs announced his tread,—
A stately warrior passed below;
But when he raised his plumèd head—
Blessed Mary! can it be?—
Secure, as if in Ousenam bowers,
He walks through Branksome's hostile towers,
With fearless step and free.
She dare not sign, she dare not speak—
Oh! if one page's slumbers break,
His blood the price must pay!
Not all the pearls Queen Mary wears,
Not Margaret's yet more precious tears,
Shall buy his life a day.

XII.

Yet was his hazard small—for well
You may bethink you of the spell

* This line is not in the first edition.

Of that sly urchin Page:
This to his lord he did impart
And made him seem, by glamour art,
A knight from Hermitage.*
Unchallenged, thus, the warder's post,
The court, unchallenged, thus he crossed,
For all the vassalage:
But, O! what magic's quaint disguise
Could blind fair Margaret's azure eyes!
She started from her seat;
While with surprise and fear she strove,
And both could scarcely master love—
Lord Henry's at her feet.

XIII.

Oft have I mused, what purpose bad
That foul malicious urchin had
To bring this meeting round;
For happy love 's a heavenly sight,
And by a vile malignant sprite
In such no joy is found:
And oft I've deemed, perchance he thought
Their erring passion might have wrought
Sorrow, and sin, and shame;
And death to Cranstoun's gallant Knight,
And to the gentle Ladye bright,
Disgrace, and loss of fame.
But earthly spirit could not tell
The heart of them that loved so well.
(True love 's the gift which God has given
To man alone beneath the heaven.)
(It is not Fantasy's hot fire,
Whose wishes, soon as granted, fly;
It liveth not in fierce desire,
With dead desire it doth not die:
It is the secret sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
In body and in soul can bind.)—
Now leave we Margaret and her Knight,
To tell you of the approaching fight.

XIV.

Their warning blast the bugles blew,
The pipe's shrill port† aroused each clan;
In haste, the deadly strife to view,
The trooping warriors eager ran:

* Hermitage Castle, on a stream of the same name, in Liddesdale. It once belonged to the earls of Bothwell, and Queen Mary visited James, earl of Bothwell, when he was lying at this castle, wounded. It passed from the Bothwells to the family of Buccleuch.

† A martial piece of music, adapted to the bagpipes.

Thick round the lists their lances stood,
Like blasted pines in Ettricke wood;
To Branksome many a look they threw.
The combatants' approach to view,
And bandied many a word of boast,
About the knight each favoured most.

XV.

Meantime full anxious was the Dame;
For now arose disputed claim,
Of who should fight for Deloraine,
'Twixt Harden and 'twixt Thirlestane:
They 'gan to reckon kin and rent,
And frowning brow on brow was bent;
But yet not long the strife—for, lo!
Himself, the Knight of Deloraine,
Strong, as it seemed, and free from pain,
In armour sheathed from top to toe,
Appeared, and craved the combat due.
The Dame her charm successful knew,*
And the fierce chiefs their claims withdrew.

XVI.

When for the lists they sought the plain,
The stately Ladye's silken rein
Did noble Howard hold;
Unarmèd, by her side he walked,
And much, in courteous phrase they talked
Of feats of arms of old.
Costly his garb—his Flemish ruff
Fell o'er his doublet, shaped of buff,
With satin slashed, and lined;
Tawny his boot, and gold his spur,
His cloak was all of Poland fur,
His hose with silver twined;
His Bilboa blade, by Marchmen felt,
Hung in a broad and studded belt;
Hence, in rude phrase, the Borderers still
Called noble Howard, Belted Will.

XVII.

Behind Lord Howard and the Dame,
Fair Margaret on her palfrey came,
Whose foot-cloth swept the ground;
White was her wimple,† and her veil,
And her loose locks a chaplet pale
Of whitest roses bound;
The lordly Angus, by her side,
In courtesy to cheer her tried;

* Refer to Canto III. Stanza 23.
† A kind of cape or tippet covering the neck and shoulders.—*Halliwell.*

Without his aid, her hand in vain
Had strove to guide her broidered rein.
He deemed, she shuddered at the sight
Of warriors met for mortal fight;
But cause of terror, all unguessed,
Was fluttering in her gentle breast,
When, in their chairs of crimson placed,
The Dame and she the barriers graced.

XVIII.

Prize of the field the young Buccleuch
An English knight led forth to view;
Scarce rued the boy his present plight
So much he longed to see the fight.
Within the lists, in knightly pride,
High Home and haughty Dacre ride;
Their leading staffs of steel they wield,
As marshals of the mortal field:
While to each knight their care assigned
Like vantage of the sun and wind.*
Then heralds hoarse did loud proclaim,
In king and queen, and warden's name,
That none, while lasts the strife,
Should dare, by look, or sign, or word,
Aid to a champion to afford,
On peril of his life;
And not a breath the silence broke,
Till thus the alternate heralds spoke:—

XIX.

ENGLISH HERALD.

Here standeth Richard of Musgrave,
Good knight and true, and freely born,
Amends from Deloraine to crave,
For foul despiteous scathe† and scorn.
He sayeth, that William of Deloraine
Is traitor false by Border laws;
This with his sword he will maintain,
So help him God, and his good cause!

XX.

SCOTTICH HERALD.

Here standeth William of Deloraine,
Good knight and true, of noble strain,
Who sayeth, that foul treason's stain,
Since he bore arms, ne'er soiled his coat;
And that, so help him God above!
He will on Musgrave's body prove,
He lyes most foully in his throat.

* This couplet is not in the first edition. † Harm.

LORD DACRE.

Forward, brave champions, to the fight!
Sound trumpets!——

LORD HOME.

——"God defend the right!"
Then, Teviot, how thine echoes rang,*
When bugle-sound and trumpet-clang
Let loose the martial foes,
And in mid list, with shield poised high,
And measured step and wary eye,
The combatants did close.

XXI.

Ill would it suit your gentle ear,
Ye lovely listeners, to hear
How to the axe the helms did sound,
And blood poured down from many a wound;
For desperate was the strife, and long,
And either warrior fierce and strong.
But, were each dame a listening knight,
I well could tell how warriors fight;
For I have seen war's lightning flashing,
Seen the claymore with bayonet clashing,
Seen through red blood the war-horse dashing,
And scorned, amid the reeling strife,
To yield a step for death or life.

XXII.

'Tis done, 'tis done! that fatal blow
Has stretched him on the bloody plain;
He strives to rise—Brave Musgrave, no!
Thence never shalt thou rise again!
He chokes in blood—some friendly hand
Undo the visor's barred band,
Unfix the gorget's iron clasp,
And give him room for life to gasp!
O, bootless aid!—haste holy Friar,
Haste, ere the sinner shall expire!
Of all his guilt let him be shriven,
And smooth his path from earth to heaven.

XXIII.

In haste the holy Friar sped;—
His naked foot was dyed with red,
As through the lists he ran;
Unmindful of the shouts on high,
That hailed the conqueror's victory,
He raised the dying man;

* These lines, to the end of the stanza, are given in place of the following couplet in the first edition.

"At the last word, with deadly blows,
The ready warriors fiercely close."

Loose waved his silver beard and hair,
As o'er him he kneelèd down in prayer;
And still the crucifix on high
He holds before his darkening eye;
And still he bends an anxious ear,
His faltering penitence to hear;
Still props him from the bloody sod,
Still, even when soul and body part,
Pours ghostly comfort on his heart,
And bids him trust in God!
Unheard he prays;—the death-pang's o'er!—
Richard of Musgrave breathes no more.

XXIV.

As if exhausted in the fight,
Or musing o'er the piteous sight,
The silent victor stands;
His beaver did he not unclasp,
Marked not the shouts, felt not the grasp
Of gratulating hands.
When lo! strange cries of wild surprise,
Mingled with seeming terror, rise
Among the Scottish bands;
And all, amid the thronged array,
In panic haste gave open way
To a half-naked ghastly man,
Who downward from the castle ran.
He crossed the barriers at a bound
And wild and haggard looked around,
As dizzy, and in pain;
And all, upon the armèd ground,
Knew William of Deloraine!
Each ladye sprung from seat with speed;
Vaulted each marshal from his steed;
"And who art thou," they cried,
"Who hast this battle fought and won?"
His plumèd helm was soon undone—
"Cranstoun of Teviot-side!
For this fair prize I've fought and won,"—
And to the Ladye led her son.

XXV.

Full oft the rescued boy she kissed,
And often pressed him to her breast;
For, under all her dauntless show,
Her heart had throbbed at every blow;
Yet not Lord Cranstoun deigned she greet,
Though low he kneelèd at her feet.—
Me lists not tell what words were made,
What Douglas, Home, and Howard said—
For Howard was a generous foe—
And how the clan united prayed,
The Ladye would the feud forego,

And deign to bless the nuptial hour
Of Cranstoun's Lord and Teviot's Flower.

XXVI.

She looked to river, looked to hill,
Thought on the Spirit's prophecy,
Then broke her silence stern and still,—
"Not you, but Fate, has vanquished me;
Their influence kindly stars may shower
On Teviot's tide and Branksome's tower,
For pride is quelled, and love is free."—
She took fair Margaret by the hand,
Who, breathless, trembling, scarce might stand;
That hand to Cranstoun's lord gave she:—
"As I am true to thee and thine,
Do thou be true to me and mine!
This clasp of love our bond shall be;
For this is your betrothing day,
And all these noble lords shall stay,
To grace it with their company."—

XXVII.

All as they left the listed plain,
Much of the story she did gain;
How Cranstoun fought with Deloraine,
And of his Page and of the Book,
Which from the wounded knight he took;
And how he sought her castle high,
That morn, by help of gramarye;
How, in Sir William's armour dight,
Stolen by his Page, while slept the knight,
He took on him the single fight.
But half his tale he left unsaid,
And lingered till he joined the maid.—
Cared not the Ladye to betray
Her mystic arts in view of day;
But well she thought, ere midnight came
Of that strange Page the pride to tame,
From his foul hands the Book to save,
And send it back to Michael's grave.—
Needs not to tell each tender word
'Twixt Margaret and 'twixt Cranstoun's lord;
Nor how she told of former woes,
And how her bosom fell and rose,
While he and Musgrave bandied blows—
Needs not these lovers' joys to tell;
One day, fair maids, you'll know them well.

XXVIII.

William of Deloraine, some chance
Had wakened from his death-like trance;
And taught that, in the listed plain,
Another, in his arms and shield,

Against fierce Musgrave axe did wield,
Under the name of Deloraine.
Hence, to the field, unarmed, he ran,
And hence his presence scared the clan,
Who held him for some fleeting wraith,*
And not a man of blood and breath.
Not much this new ally he loved,
Yet, when he saw what hap had proved,
He greeted him right heartilie:
He would not waken old debate,
For he was void of rancorous hate,
Though rude, and scant of courtesy;
In raids† he spilt but seldom blood,
Unless when men at arms withstood,
Or, as was meet, for deadly feud.
He ne'er bore grudge for stalwart blow,
Ta'en in fair fight from gallant foe:
And so 'twas seen of him, e'en now,
When on dead Musgrave he looked down
Grief darkened on his rugged brow,
Though half disguised with a frown;
And thus, while sorrow bent his head,
His foeman's epitaph he made·

XXIX.

"Now, Richard Musgrave, liest thou here!
I ween, my deadly enemy;
For if I slew thy brother dear,
Thou slewst a sister's son to me;
And when I lay in dungeon dark,
Of Naworth Castle, long months three
Till ransomed for a thousand mark,
Dark Musgrave, it was long of thee.
And, Musgrave, could our fight be tried,
And thou wert now alive, as I,
No mortal man should us divide,
Till one, or both of us, did die.
Yet rest thee God! for well I know,
I ne'er shall find a nobler foe.
In all the northern counties here,
Whose word is, Snaffle, spur, and spear,‡
Thou wert the best to follow gear.
'Twas pleasure, as we looked behind,
To see how thou the chase couldst wind,
Cheer the dark bloodhound on his way,
And with the bugle rouse the fray!§

*The spectral apparition of a living person.
† Hostile incursions.
‡ "The lands, that over Ouse to Berwick forth do bear,
Have for their blazon had, the snaffle, spur, and spear."
Poly-Albion, Song xiii.
§ The pursuit of Border marauders was followed by the injured

I'd give the lands of Deloraine,
Dark Musgrave were alive again."—

XXX.

So mourned he, till Lord Dacre's band
Were bowning back to Cumberland.
They raised brave Musgrave from the field,
And laid him on his bloody shield;
On levelled lances, four and four,
By turns the noble burden bore:
Before, at times, upon the gale,
Was heard the Minstrel's plaintive wail;
Behind, four priests, in sable stole,
Sung requiem for the warrior's soul:
Around, the horsemen slowly rode;
With trailing pikes the spearmen trod;
And thus the gallant knight they bore,
Through Liddesdale, to Leven's shore;
Thence to Holme Coltrame's lofty nave,
And laid him in his father's grave.

The harp's wild notes, though hushed the song,
The mimic march of death prolong;
Now seems it far, and now a-near,
Now meets, and now eludes the ear;
Now seems some mountain-side to sweep,
Now faintly dies in valley deep;
Seems now as if the Minstrel's wail,
Now the sad requiem, loads the gale;
Last, o'er the warrior's closing grave,
Rung the full choir in choral stave.

After due pause, they bade him tell,
Why he, who touched the harp so well,
Should thus, with ill-rewarded toil,
Wander a poor and thankless soil,
When the more generous Southern Land
Would well requite his skilful hand.

The Aged Harper, howsoe'er
His only friend, his harp, was dear,
Liked not to hear it ranked so high
Above his flowing poesy:

party and his friends with bloodhounds and bugle-horn, and was called the *hot-trod*. He was entitled, if his dog could trace the scent, to follow the invaders into the opposite kingdom; a privilege which often occasioned bloodshed. In addition to what has been said of the bloodhound, I may add, that the breed was kept up by the Buccleuch family on their Border estates till within the eighteenth century. A person was alive in the memory of man, who remembered a bloodhound being kept at Eldinhope, in Ettricke Forest, for whose maintenance the tenant had an allowance of meal. At that time the sheep were always watched at night.

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!

Less liked he still, that scornful jeer
Misprized the land he loved so dear;
High was the sound, as thus again
The Bard resumed his minstrel strain.

CANTO SIXTH.

I.

BREATHES there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned,
From wandering on a foreign strand!—
If such there breathe, go, mark him well;
For him no minstrel raptures swell;
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentred all in self,
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung.

II.

O Caledonia! stern and wild,
Meet nurse for a poetic child!
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood,
Land of my sires! what mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band,
That knits me to thy rugged strand!
Still, as I view each well-known scene,
Think what is now, and what hath been,
Seems as, to me, of all bereft,
Sole friends thy woods and streams were left;
And thus I love them better still,
Even in extremity of ill.
By Yarrow's stream still let me stray,
Though none should guide my feeble way;
Still feel the breeze down Ettricke break,
Although it chill my withered cheek;
Still lay my head by Teviot stone,*
Though there, forgotten and alone,
The Bard may draw his parting groan.

* This line is not found in the first edition.

III.

Not scorned like me! to Branksome Hall
The Minstrels came, at festive call;
Trooping they came, from near and far,
The jovial priests of mirth and war;
Alike for feast and fight prepared,
Battle and banquet both they shared.
Of late, before each martial clan,
They blew their death-note in the van,
But now, for every merry mate,
Rose the portcullis' iron grate;
They sound the pipe, they strike the string,
They dance, they revel, and they sing,
Till the rude turrets shake and ring.

IV.

Me lists not at this tide declare
The splendour of the spousal rite,
How mustered in the chapel fair
Both maid and matron, squire and knight;
Me lists not tell of owches* rare,
Of mantles green, and braided hair,
And kirtles furred with miniver;†
What plumage waved the altar round,
How spurs, and ringing chainlets, sound:
And hard it were for Bard to speak
The changeful hue of Margaret's cheek;
That lovely hue which comes and flies,
As awe and shame alternate rise!

V.

Some bards have sung, the Ladye high
Chapel or altar came not nigh;
Nor durst the rites of spousal grace,
So much she feared each holy place.
False slanders these:—I trust right well,
She wrought not by forbidden spell;‡
For mighty words and signs have power
O'er sprites in planetary hour:
Yet scarce I praise their venturous part,
Who tamper with such dangerous art.
But this for faithful truth I say,—
The Ladye by the altar stood,

* Jewels.—*Halliwell.*

† The fur of the ermine mixed with that of the small weasel. The white stoat is called a *minifer* in Norfolk.—*Halliwell.*

‡ Popular belief, though contrary to the doctrines of the church, made a favourable distinction betwixt magicians, and necromancers, or wizards: the former were supposed to command the evil spirits, and the latter to serve, or at least to be in league and compact with, those enemies of mankind. The arts of subjecting the demons were manifold; sometimes the fiends were actually swindled by the magicians, as in the case of the bargain betwixt one of their number and the poet Virgil.

Of sable velvet her array,
And on her head a crimson hood,
With pearls embroidered and entwined,
Guarded with gold, with ermine lined;
A merlin* sat upon her wrist,
Held by a leash of silken twist.

VI.

The spousal rites were ended soon:
'Twas now the merry hour of noon,
And in the lofty arched hall
Was spread the gorgeous festival.
Steward and squire, with heedful haste,
Marshalled the rank of every guest;
Pages, with ready blade, were there,
The mighty meal to carve and share:
O'er capon, heron-shew,† and crane,
And princely peacock's‡ gilded train,
And o'er the boar-head,§ garnished brave,
And cygnet‖ from St. Mary's wave;
O'er ptarmigan and venison,
The priest had spoke his benison.
Then rose the riot and the din,
Above, beneath, without, within!
For, from the lofty balcony,
Rung trumpet, shalm; and psaltery;
Their clanging bowls old warriors quaffed,
Loudly they spoke, and loudly laughed;
Whispered young knights, in tone more mild,
To ladies fair, and ladies smiled.
The hooded hawks, high perched on beam,
The clamour joined with whistling scream,
And flapped their wings, and shook their bells,
In concert with the stag-hounds' yells.
Round go the flasks of ruddy wine,
From Bourdeaux, Orleans, or the Rhine;

* A merlin, or sparrow-hawk, was usually carried by ladies of rank, as a falcon was, in time of peace, the constant attendant of a knight, or baron.—See LATHAM *on Falconry.*

† Heron.

‡ The peacock, it is well known, was considered, during the times of chivalry, not merely as an exquisite delicacy, but as a dish of peculiar solemnity. After being roasted, it was again decorated with its plumage, and a sponge, dipped in lighted spirits of wine, was placed in its bill. When it was introduced on days of grand festival, it was the signal for the adventurous knights to take upon them vows to do some deed of chivalry, "before the peacock and the ladies."

§ The boar's head was also a usual dish of feudal splendour. In Scotland it was sometimes surrounded with little banners, displaying the colours and achievements of the baron at whose board it was served.

‖ There are often flights of wild swans upon St. Mary's Lake, at the head of the river Yarrow.

Their tasks the busy sewers ply,
And all is mirth and revelry.

VII.

The Goblin Page, omitting still
No opportunity of ill,
Strove now, while blood ran hot and high,
To rouse debate and jealousy;
Till Conrad, lord of Wolfenstein,
By nature fierce, and warm with wine,
And now in humour highly crossed,
About some steeds his band had lost,
High words to words succeeding still,
Smote with his gauntlet stout Hunthill,*
A hot and hardy Rutherford,
Whom men call Dickon Draw-the-Sword.
He took it on the Page's saye,
Hunthill had driven these steeds away.
Then Howard, Home, and Douglas rose,
The kindling discord to compose:
Stern Rutherford right little said,
But bit his glove,† and shook his head.—
A fortnight thence, in Inglewood,
Stout Conrad, cold, and drenched in blood,
His bosom gored with many a wound,
Was by a woodman's lyme-dog found;
Unknown the manner of his death,
Gone was his brand, both sword and sheath;
But ever from that time, 'twas said,
That Dickon wore a Cologne blade.

VIII.

The Dwarf, who feared his master's eye
Might his foul treachery espie,
Now sought the castle buttery,
Where many a yeoman, bold and free,

* The Rutherfords of Hunthill were an ancient race of Border lairds, whose names occur in history, sometimes as defending the frontier against the English, sometimes as disturbing the peace of their own country. Dickon Draw-the-Sword was son to the ancient warrior called in tradition the Cock of Hunthill.

† To bite the thumb, or the glove, seems not to have been considered, upon the Border, as a gesture of contempt, though so used by Shakespeare, but as a pledge of mortal revenge. It is yet remembered, that a young gentleman of Teviotdale, on the morning after a hard drinking-bout, observed that he had bitten his glove. He instantly demanded of his companion, with whom he had quarrelled, and learning that he had had words with one of the party, insisted on instant satisfaction, asserting, that though he remembered nothing of the dispute, yet he was sure he never would have bit his glove, unless he had received some unpardonable insult. He fell in the duel, which was fought near Selkirk in 1721. Lyme-dog. A common hound led by a thong called a lime.—*Halliwell.*

Revelled as merrily and well
As those that sat in lordly selle.
Watt Tinlinn, there, did frankly raise
The pledge to Arthur Fire-the-Braes;*
And he, as by his breeding bound,
To Howard's merry-men sent it round.
To quit them, on the English side,
Red Roland Forster loudly cried,
"A deep carouse to yon fair bride!"
At every pledge, from vat and pail,
Foamed forth, in floods, the nut-brown ale;
While shout the riders every one,
Such day of mirth ne'er cheered their clan,
Since old Buccleuch the name did gain,
When in the cleuch the buck was ta'en.†

IX.

The wily Page, with vengeful thought,
Remembered him of Tinlinn's yew,
And swore, it should be dearly bought,
That ever he the arrow drew.
First, he the yeoman did molest,
With bitter gibe and taunting jest;
Told, how he fled at Solway strife,
And how Hob Armstrong cheered his wife;
Then, shunning still his powerful arm,
At unawares he wrought him harm;
From trencher stole his choicest cheer,
Dashed from his lips his can of beer,
Then, to his knee sly creeping on,
With bodkin pierced him to the bone:
The venomed wound, and festering joint,
Long after rued that bodkin's point.
The startled yeoman swore and spurned,
And board and flagons overturned;
Riot and clamour wild began;
Back to the hall the Urchin ran;
Took in a darkling nook his post,
And grinned and muttered, "Lost! lost! lost!"

X.

By this, the Dame, lest further fray,
Should mar the concord of the day,
Had bid the Minstrels tune their lay.
And first stept forth old Albert Græme,‡
The Minstrel of that ancient name:

* The person bearing this redoubtable *nomme de guerre* was an Elliot, and resided at Thorleshope, in Liddesdale. He occurs in the list of Border riders in 1597.

† This refers to a tradition assigning a romantic origin to the name.

‡ "John Grahame, second son of Malice, earl of Monteith, commonly surnamed 'John with the Bright Sword,' upon some displeasure risen against him at court, retired with many of his clan and kindred

Was none who struck the harp so well,
Within the land Debateable;
Well friended too, his hardy kin,
Whoever lost, were sure to win;
They sought the beeves, that made their broth,
In Scotland and in England both.
In homely guise, as nature bade,
His simple song the Borderer said.

XI.

ALBERT GRÆME.

It was an English Ladye bright,
(The sun shines clear on Carlisle wall,*)
And she would marry a Scottish knight,
For Love will still be lord of all.

Blithely they saw the rising sun,
When he shone fair on Carlisle wall,
But they were sad ere day was done,
Though Love was still the lord of all.

Her sire gave brooch and jewel fine,
Where the sun shines fair on Carlisle wall;
Her brother gave but a flask of wine,
For ire that Love was lord of all.

For she had lands, both meadow and lee,
Where the sun shines fair on Carlisle wall;
And he swore her death, ere he would see
A Scottish knight the lord of all.

XII.

That wine she had not tasted well,
(The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall,)
When dead, in her true love's arms, she fell,
For Love was still the lord of all.

He pierced her brother to the heart,
Where the sun shines fair on Carlisle wall;—
So perish all, would true love part,
That Love may still be lord of all!

And then he took the cross divine,
Where the sun shines fair on Carlisle wall,
And died for her sake in Palestine,
So Love was still the lord of all.

Now all ye lovers, that faithful prove,
(The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall,)
Pray for their souls who died for love,
For Love shall still be lord of all!

into the English Borders in the reign of King Henry the Fourth, where they seated themselves; and many of their posterity have continued there ever since."—*Introduction to the Hist. of Cumberland.*

* This burden is adopted, with some alteration, from an old Scottish song.

XIII.

As ended Albert's simple lay,
Arose a bard of loftier port;
For sonnet, rhyme, and roundelay,
Renowned in haughty Henry's court:
There rung thy harp, unrivalled long,
Fitztraver of the silver song!
The gentle Surrey loved his lyre—
Who has not heard of Surrey's fame?*
His was the hero's soul of fire,
And his the bard's immortal name,
And his was love, exalted high
By all the glow of chivalry.

XIV.

They sought, together, climes afar,
And oft, within some olive grove,
When evening came, with twinkling star,
They sung of Surrey's absent love.
His step the Italian peasant stayed,
And deemed that spirits from on high,
Round where some hermit saint was laid,
Were breathing heavenly melody;
So sweet did harp and voice combine,
To praise the name of Geraldine.

XV.

Fitztraver! O what tongue may say
The pangs thy faithful bosom knew,
When Surrey, of the deathless lay,
Ungrateful Tudor's sentence slew?
Regardless of the tyrant's frown,
His harp called wrath and vengeance down.
He left, for Naworth's iron towers,
Windsor's green glades, and courtly bowers,
And, faithful to his patron's name,
With Howard still Fitztraver came;
Lord William's foremost favourite he,
And chief of all his minstrelsy.

XVI.

FITZTRAVER.

'Twas All-souls' eve, and Surrey's heart beat high;
He heard the midnight-bell with anxious start,
Which told the mystic hour, approaching nigh,
When wise Cornelius promised, by his art,

*The gallant and unfortunate Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, was unquestionably the most accomplished cavalier of his time; and his sonnets display beauties which would do honour to a more polished age. He was beheaded on Tower-hill in 1547; a victim to the mean jealousy of Henry VIII., who could not bear so brilliant a character near his throne. The song of the supposed bard is founded on an incident said to have happened to the earl in his

To show to him the ladye of his heart,
Albeit betwixt them roared the ocean grim;
Yet so the sage had hight* to play his part,
That he should see her form in life and limb,
And mark, if still she loved, and still she thought of him.

XVII.

Dark was the vaulted room of gramarye,
To which the Wizard led the gallant Knight,
Save that before a mirror, huge and high,
A hallowed taper shed a glimmering light
On mystic implements of magic might;
On cross, and character, and talisman,
And almagest,† and altar, nothing bright:
For fitful was the lustre, pale and wan,
As watch-light, by the bed of some departing man.

XVIII.

But soon, within that mirror, huge and high,
Was seen a self-emitted light to gleam;
And forms upon its breast the earl 'gan spy,
Cloudy and indistinct, as feverish dream;
Till, slow arranging, and defined, they seem
To form a lordly and a lofty room,
Part lighted by a lamp with silver beam,
Placed by a couch of Agra's silken loom,
And part by moonshine pale, and part was hid in gloom.

XIX.

Fair all the pageant—but how passing fair
The slender form, which lay on couch of Ind!
O'er her white bosom strayed her hazel hair,
Pale her dear cheek, as if for love she pined;
All in her night-robe loose, she lay reclined,
And, pensive, read from tablet eburnine
Some strain, that seemed her inmost soul to find:—
That favoured strain was Surrey's raptured line,
That fair and lovely form, the Ladye Geraldine.

XX.

Slow rolled the clouds upon the lovely form,
And swept the goodly vision all away—
So royal envy rolled the murky storm
O'er my beloved Master's glorious day.

travels. Cornelius Agrippa, the celebrated alchemist, showed him, in a looking-glass, the lovely Geraldine, to whose service he had devoted his pen and his sword. The vision represented her as indisposed, and reclining upon a couch, reading her lover's verses by the light of a waxen taper.

* Promised. It also means "called," a sin Childe Harold, Byron writes—

"Childe Harold was he hight."

† A book or collection of problems in astronomy and geometry.

Thou jealous, ruthless tyrant! Heaven repay
On thee, and on thy children's latest line,
The wild caprice of thy despotic sway,
The gory bridal bed, the plundered shrine,
The murdered Surrey's blood, the tears of Geraldine!

XXI.

Both Scots, and Southern chiefs, prolong
Applauses of Fitztraver's song:
These hated Henry's name as death,
And those still held the ancient faith.—
Then, from his seat, with lofty air,
Rose Harold, bard of brave St. Clair;*
St. Clair, who, feasting high at Home,
Had with that lord to battle come.
Harold was born where restless seas
Howl round the storm-swept Orcades;
Where erst St. Clairs held princely sway
O'er isle and islet, strait and bay;—
Still nods their palace to its fall,
Thy pride and sorrow, fair Kirkwall!†—
Thence oft he marked fierce Pentland rave;
As if grim Odin rode her wave;
And watched, the whilst, with visage pale,
And throbbing heart, the struggling sail;
For all of wonderful and wild
Had rapture for the lonely child.

XXII.

And much of wild and wonderful,
In these rude isles might Fancy cull;
For thither came, in times afar,
Stern Lochlin's sons of roving war,
The Norsemen, trained to spoil and blood,
Skilled to prepare the raven's food;
Kings of the main their leaders brave,
Their barks the dragons of the wave.‡

* The St. Clairs are of Norman extraction, being descended from William de St. Clair, second son of Walderne Compte de St. Clair, and Margaret, daughter to Richard, duke of Normandy. He was called, for his fair deportment, the Seemly St. Clair, and settling in Scotland during the reign of Malcolm Ceanmore, obtained large grants of land in Mid-Lothian. These domains were increased by the liberality of succeeding monarchs to the descendants of the family, and comprehended the baronies of Rosline, Pentland, Cowsland, Cardaine, and several others.

† The castle of Kirkwall was built by the St. Clairs, while earls of Orkney. It was dismantled by the earl of Caithness about 1615, having been garrisoned against the government by Robert Stewart, natural son to the earl of Orkney.

‡ The chiefs of the *Vikingr*, or Scandinavian pirates, assumed the title of *Sækonungr*, or Sea-kings. Ships, in the inflated language of the Scalds, are often termed the serpents of the ocean.

And there, in many a stormy vale,
The Scald had told his wondrous tale;
And many a Runic column high
Had witnessed grim idolatry.
And thus had Harold, in his youth,
Learned many a Saga's rhyme uncouth,—
Of that Sea-Snake,* tremendous curled,
Whose monstrous circle girds the world;
Of those dread Maids,† whose hideous yell
Maddens the battle's bloody swell;
Of chiefs, who, guided through the gloom
By the pale death-lights of the tomb,
Ransacked the graves of warriors old,‡
Their falchions wrenched from corpses' hold,
Waked the deaf tomb with war's alarms,
And bade the dead arise to arms!
With war and wonder all on flame,
To Roslin's bowers young Harold came,
Where, by sweet glen and greenwood tree,
He learned a milder minstrelsy;
Yet something of the Northern spell
Mixed with the softer numbers well.

XXIII.

HAROLD.

O listen, listen, ladies gay!
No haughty feat of arms I tell:
Soft is the note, and sad the lay,
That mourns the lovely Rosabelle.§

—"Moor, moor the barge, ye gallant crew!
And, gentle ladye, deign to stay!
Rest thee in Castle Ravensheuch,‖
Nor tempt the stormy firth to-day.

* The *Jormungandr*, or Snake of the Ocean, whose folds surround the earth, is one of the wildest fictions of the Edda. It was very nearly caught by the god Thor, who went to fish for it with a hook baited with a bull's head. In the battle betwixt the evil demons and the divinities of Odin, which is to precede the *Ragnarockr*, or Twilight of the Gods, this snake is to act a conspicuous part.

† These were the *Valkyriur*, or Selectors of the Slain, despatched by Odin from Valhalla, to choose those who were to die, and to distribute the contest. They are well known to the English reader, as Gray's Fatal Sisters.

‡ The northern warriors were usually entombed with their arms, and their other treasures.

§ This was a family name in the house of St. Clair. Henry St. Clair, the second of the line, married Rosabelle, fourth daughter of the earl of Stratherne.

‖ A large and strong castle, now ruinous, situated betwixt Kirkaldy and Dysart, on a steep crag, washed by the Firth of Forth. It was conferred on Sir William St. Clair, as a slight compensation for the

"The blackening wave is edged with white;
To inch and rock the sea-mews fly;
The fishers have heard the Water Sprite,
Whose screams forebode that wreck is nigh.

"Last night the gifted Seer did view
A wet shroud swathed round ladye gay;
Then stay thee, Fair, in Ravensheuch;
Why cross the gloomy firth to-day?"—

"'Tis not because Lord Lindesay's heir
To-night at Roslin leads the ball,
But that my ladye-mother there
Sits lonely in her castle-hall.

"'Tis not because the ring they ride,
And Lindesay at the ring rides well,
But that my sire the wine will chide,
If 'tis not filled by Rosabelle."—

"O'er Roslin all that dreary night
A wondrous blaze was seen to gleam;
'Twas broader than the watch-fire light,
And redder than the bright moon-beam.

It glared on Roslin's castled rock,
It ruddied all the copse-wood glen;
'Twas seen from Dreyden's groves of oak,
And seen from caverned Hawthornden.

Seemed all on fire that chapel* proud,
Where Roslin's chiefs uncoffined lie;
Each Baron, for a sable shroud,
Sheathed in his iron panoply.

Seemed all on fire within, around,
Deep sacristy and altar's pale;
Shone every pillar foliage-bound,
And glimmered all the dead men's mail.

Blazed battlement and pinnet high,
Blazed every rose-carved buttress fair—
So still they blaze, when fate is nigh
The lordly line of high St. Clair.

There are twenty of Roslin's barons bold
Lie buried within that proud chapelle;
Each one the holy vault doth hold—
But the sea holds lovely Rosabelle!

earldom of Orkney, by a charter of King James III. dated in 1471. It was long a principal residence of the barons of Roslin.

* The beautiful chapel of Roslin is still in tolerable preservation. It was founded in 1446, by William St. Clair, who played a very important part in history.

And each St. Clair was buried there,
With candle, with book, and with knell,
But the sea-caves rung, and the wild winds sung,
The dirge of lovely Rosabelle.*

XXIV.

So sweet was Harold's piteous lay,
Scarce marked the guests the darkened hall,
Though, long before the sinking day,
A wondrous shade involved them all:
It was not eddying mist or fog,
Drained by the sun from fen or bog;
Of no eclipse had sages told;
And yet, as it came on apace,
Each one could scarce his neighbour's face,
Could scarce his own stretched hand behold.
A secret horror checked the feast,
And chilled the soul of every guest;
Even the high Dame stood half-aghast,
She knew some evil on the blast;
The elvish Page fell to the ground,
And, shuddering, muttered, "Found! found! found!"

XXV.

Then, sudden, through the darkened air
A flash of lightning came;
So broad, so bright, so red the glare,
The castle seemed on flame;
Glanced every rafter of the hall,
Glanced every shield upon the wall;
Each trophied beam, each sculptured stone,
Were instant seen, and instant gone;
Full through the guests' bedazzled band
Resistless flashed the levin† brand,
And filled the hall with smouldering smoke,
As on the elvish Page it broke.
It broke, with thunder long and loud,
Dismayed the brave, appalled the proud,—
From sea to sea the larum rung;
On Berwick wall, and at Carlisle withal,
To arms the startled warders sprung.
When ended was the dreadful roar,
The elvish Dwarf was seen no more!

XXVI.

Some heard a voice in Branksome Hall,
Some saw a sight, not seen by all;
That dreadful voice was heard by some,
Cry, with loud summons, "GYLBIN, COME!"‡

* There are some trifling changes in the text of this ballad from that of the first edition.

† Lightning.

‡ The summons to the Goblin Page, according to the old story of Gilpin Horner.

And on the spot where burst the brand,
Just where the Page had flung him down,
Some saw an arm, and some a hand,
And some the waving of a gown.
The guests in silence prayed and shook,
And terror dimmed each lofty look:
But none of all the astonished train
Was so dismayed as Deloraine;
His blood did freeze, his brain did burn,
'Twas feared his mind would ne'er return;
For he was speechless, ghastly, wan,
Like him, of whom the story ran,
Who spoke the spectre-hound in Man.*
At length, by fits, he darkly told,
With broken hint, and shuddering cold—
That he had seen, right certainly,
A shape with amice wrapped around,
With a wrought Spanish baldric bound,
Like a pilgrim from beyond the sea;
And knew—but how it mattered not—
It was the wizard, Michael Scott.

XXVII.

The anxious crowd, with horror pale,
All trembling, heard the wondrous tale:
No sound was made, no word was spoke,
Till noble Angus silence broke;
And he a solemn sacred plight
Did to St. Bryde† of Douglas make,
That he a pilgrimage would take
To Melrose Abbey, for the sake
Of Michael's restless sprite.
Then each, to ease his troubled breast,
To some blessed saint his prayers addressed—
Some to St. Modan made their vows,
Some to St. Mary of the Lowes,
Some to the Holy Rood of Lisle,
Some to Our Lady of the Isle;
Each did his patron witness make,
That he such pilgrimage would take,
And Monks should sing, and bells should toll,
All for the weal of Michael's soul.
While vows were ta'en, and prayers were prayed,
'Tis said the noble Dame, dismayed,
Renounced, for aye, dark magic's aid.

* This refers to a story told of the ancient castle of Peeltown, in the Isle of Man, which is said to have been haunted by an apparition, called in the Mankish language, the "Mauthe Doog."

† This was a favourite saint of the house of Douglas, and of the earl of Angus in particular.

XXVIII.

Nought of the bridal will I tell,
Which after in short space befell;
Nor how brave sons and daughters fair
Blessed Teviot's Flower and Cranstoun's heir:
After such dreadful scene, 'twere vain
To wake the note of mirth again;
More meet it were to mark the day
Of penitence and prayer divine,
When pilgrim-chiefs, in sad array,
Sought Melrose' holy shrine.

XXIX.

With naked foot, and sackcloth vest,
And arms enfolded on his breast,
Did every pilgrim go;
The standers-by might hear uneath,*
Footstep, or voice, or high-drawn breath,
Through all the lengthened row:
No lordly look, no martial stride,
Gone was their glory, sunk their pride,
Forgotten their renown;
Silent and slow, like ghosts, they glide
To the high altar's hallowed side,
And there they kneeled them down;
Above the suppliant chieftains wave
The banners of departed brave;
Beneath the lettered stones were laid
The ashes of their fathers dead;
From many a garnished niche around,
Stern saints, and tortured martyrs, frowned.

XXX.

And slow up the dim aisle afar,
With sable cowl and scapular,†
And snow-white stoles, in order due,
The holy Fathers, two and two,
In long procession came;
Taper, and host, and book they bare,
And holy banner, flourished fair
With the Redeemer's name.
Above the prostrate pilgrim band
The mitred Abbot stretched his hand,
And blessed them as they kneeled;
With holy cross he signed them all,
And prayed they might be sage in hall,
And fortunate in field.
Then mass was sung, and prayers were said,
And solemn requiem for the dead;

* Hardly.
† A narrow piece of cloth worn by monks over the rest of their dress, reaching almost to the feet.—*Halliwell.*

And bells tolled out their mighty peal,
For the departed spirit's weal;
And ever in the office close
The hymn of intercession rose;
And far the echoing aisles prolong
The awful burthen of the song,—

DIES IRÆ, DIES ILLA,
SOLVET SÆCLUM IN FAVILLA,

While the pealing organ rung;
Were it meet with sacred strain
To close my lay, so light and vain,
Thus the holy Fathers sung:—

XXXI.

HYMN FOR THE DEAD.

That day of wrath, that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
What power shall be the sinner's stay!
How shall he meet that dreadful day,
When, shrivelling like a parchèd scroll,
The flaming heavens together roll;
When louder yet, and yet more dread,
Swells the high trump that wakes the dead!

O! on that day, that wrathful day,
When man to judgment wakes from clay,
Be THOU the trembling sinner's stay,
Though heaven and earth shall pass away!

HUSHED is the harp—the Minstrel gone.
And did he wander forth alone?
Alone, in indigence and age,
To linger out his pilgrimage?
No—close beneath proud Newark's tower,
Arose the Minstrel's lowly bower;
A simple hut; but there was seen
The little garden edged with green,
The cheerful hearth, and lattice clean.
There sheltered wanderers, by the blaze,
Oft heard the tale of other days;
For much he loved to ope his door,
And give the aid he begged before.
So passed the winter's day; but still,
When summer smiled on sweet Bowhill,
And July's eve, with balmy breath,
Waved the blue-bells on Newark-heath;
When throstles sung in Hare-head shaw,
And corn was green on Carterhaugh,

And flourished, broad, Blackandro's oak,
The aged Harper's soul awoke!
Then would he sing achievements high,
And circumstance of chivalry,
Till the rapt traveller would stay,
Forgetful of the closing day;
And noble youths, the strain to hear,
Forsook the hunting of the deer;
And Yarrow, as he rolled along,
Bore burden to the Minstrel's song.

MARMION:

A

TALE OF FLODDEN FIELD.

A Poem,

IN SIX CANTOS.

Alas! that Scottish Maid should sing
The combat where her lover fell!
That Scottish Bard should wake the string,
The triumph of our foes to tell!—LEYDEN.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

HENRY, LORD MONTAGU,

&c. &c. &c.

THIS ROMANCE IS INSCRIBED BY THE AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION, 1808.

It is hardly to be expected, that an Author, whom the Public has honoured with some degree of applause, should not be again a trespasser on their kindness. Yet the Author of Marmion must be supposed to feel some anxiety concerning its success, since he is sensible that he hazards, by this second intrusion, any reputation which his first Poem may have procured him. The present Story turns upon the private adventures of a fictitious character; but is called a Tale of Flodden Field, because the hero's fate is connected with that memorable defeat, and the causes which led to it. The design of the Author was, if possible, to apprize his Readers, at the outset, of the date of his Story, and to prepare them for the manners of the Age in which it is laid. Any Historical narrative, far more an attempt at Epic composition, exceeded his plan of a Romantic Tale; yet he may be permitted to hope, from the popularity of The Lay of the Last Minstrel, that an attempt to paint the manners of the feudal times, upon a broader scale, and in the course of a more interesting story, will not be unacceptable to the Public.

The Poem opens about the commencement of August, and concludes with the defeat of Flodden, 9th September, 1513.

MARMION.

INTRODUCTION TO CANTO FIRST.

TO WILLIAM STEWART ROSE, ESQ.

Ashestiel, Ettricke Forest.

NOVEMBER'S sky is chill and drear,
November's leaf is red and sear:
Late, gazing down the steepy linn,*
That hems our little garden in,
Low in its dark and narrow glen,
You scarce the rivulet might ken,
So thick the tangled green-wood grew,
So feeble trilled the streamlet through:
Now, murmuring hoarse, and frequent seen
Through bush and brier, no longer green,
An angry brook, it sweeps the glade,
Brawls over rock and wild cascade,
And, foaming brown with double speed,
Hurries its waters to the Tweed.

No longer Autumn's glowing red
Upon our Forest hills is shed;
No more, beneath the evening beam,
Fair Tweed reflects their purple gleam;
Away hath passed the heather-bell,
That bloomed so rich on Needpath-fell;
Sallow his brow, and russet bare
Are now the sister-heights of Yair.
The sheep, before the pinching heaven,
To sheltered dale and down are driven,
Where yet some faded herbage pines,
And yet a watery sunbeam shines:
In meek despondency they eye
The withered sward and wintry sky,
And far beneath their summer hill,
Stray sadly by Glenkinnon's rill:
The shepherd shifts his mantle's fold,
And wraps him closer from the cold;

* A pool into which water falls over a precipice.—*Jamieson.*

His dogs no merry circles wheel,
But, shivering, follow at his heel;
A cowering glance they often cast,
As deeper moans the gathering blast.

My imps, though hardy, bold, and wild,
As best befits the mountain child,
Feel the sad influence of the hour,
And wail the daisy's vanished flower;
Their summer gambols tell, and mourn,
And anxious ask,—Will spring return,
And birds and lambs again be gay,
And blossoms clothe the hawthorn spray?

Yes, prattlers, yes. The daisy's flower
Again shall paint your summer bower;
Again the hawthorn shall supply
The garlands you delight to tie;
The lambs upon the lea shall bound,
The wild birds carol to the round,
And while you frolic light as they,
Too short shall seem the summer day.

To mute and to material things
New life revolving summer brings;
The genial call dead Nature hears,
And in her glory reappears.
But oh! my country's wintry state
What second spring shall renovate?
What powerful call shall bid arise
The buried warlike, and the wise?
The mind, that thought for Britain's weel,
The hand, that grasped the victor steel?
The vernal sun new life bestows
Even on the meanest flower that blows;
But vainly, vainly, may he shine,
Where glory weeps o'er NELSON'S shrine;
And vainly pierce the solemn gloom,
That shrouds, O PITT, thy hallowed tomb!

Deep graved in every British heart,
O never let those names depart!
Say to your sons,—Lo, here his grave,
Who victor* died on Gadite wave;
To him, as to the burning levin,†
Short, bright, resistless course was given;
Where'er his country's foes were found,
Was heard the fated thunder's sound,
Till burst the bolt on yonder shore,
Rolled, blazed, destroyed,—and was no more.

Nor mourn ye less his perished worth,
Who bade the conqueror go forth,

* Nelson. † Lightning.—*Jamieson.*

And launched that thunderbolt of war
On Egypt, Hafnia,* Trafalgar;
Who, born to guide such high emprize,
For Britain's weal was early wise:
Alas! to whom the Almighty gave,
For Britain's sins, an early grave;
His worth, who, in his mightiest hour,
A bauble held the pride of power,
Spurned at the sordid lust of pelf,
And served his Albion for herself;
Who, when the frantic crowd amain
Strained at subjection's bursting rein,
O'er their wild mood full conquest gained,
The pride, he would not crush, restrained,
Showed their fierce zeal and worthier cause,
And brought the freeman's arm to aid the freeman's laws.

Hadst thou but lived, though stripped of power,
A watchman on the lonely tower,
Thy thrilling trumpet had roused the land,
When fraud or danger were at hand;
By thee, as by the beacon-light,
Our pilots had kept course aright;
As some proud column, though alone,
Thy strength had propped the tottering throne.
Now is the stately column broke,
The beacon-light is quenched in smoke,
The trumpet's silver sound is still,
The warder silent on the hill!

Oh, think, how to his latest day,
When Death, just hovering, claimed his prey,
With Palinure's unaltered mood,
Firm, at his dangerous post he stood;
Each call for needful rest repelled,
With dying hand the rudder held,
Till, in his fall, with fateful sway,
The steerage of the realm gave way!
Then, while on Britain's thousand plains,
One unpolluted church remains,
Whose peaceful bells ne'er sent around
The bloody tocsin's maddening sound,
But still, upon the hallowed day,
Convoke the swains to praise and pray;
While faith and civil peace are dear,
Grace this cold marble with a tear,—
He, who preserved them, PITT, lies here!

Nor yet suppress the generous sigh,
Because his Rival slumbers nigh;
Nor be thy *requiescat* dumb,
Lest it be said o'er FOX's tomb.

* Copenhagen.

For talents mourn, untimely lost,
When best employed, and wanted most;
Mourn genius high, and lore profound,
And wit that loved to play, not wound;
And all the reasoning powers divine,
To penetrate, resolve, combine;
And feelings keen, and fancy's glow,—
They sleep with him who sleeps below;
And, if thou mourn'st they could not save
From error him who owns this grave,
Be every harsher thought suppressed,
And sacred be the last long rest!
Here, where the end of earthly things
Lays heroes, patriots, bards, and kings;
Where stiff the hand, and still the tongue,
Of those who fought, and spoke, and sung;
Here, where the fretted aisles prolong
The distant notes of holy song,
As if some angel spoke agen,
All peace on earth, good-will to men;
If ever from an English heart,
O *here* let prejudice depart,
And, partial feeling cast aside,
Record that Fox a Briton did!
When Europe crouched to France's yoke,
And Austria bent, and Prussia broke,
And the firm Russian's purpose brave
Was bartered by a timorous slave,
Even then dishonour's peace he spurned,
The sullied olive-branch returned,
Stood for his country's glory fast,
And nailed her colours to the mast.
Heaven, to reward his firmness, gave
A portion in this honoured grave;
And ne'er held marble in its trust
Of two such wondrous men the dust.

With more than mortal powers endowed,
How high they soared above the crowd!
Theirs was no common party race,
Jostling by dark intrigue for place;
Like fabled Gods, their mighty war
Shook realms and nations in its jar;
Beneath each banner proud to stand,
Looked up the noblest of the land,
Till through the British world were known
The names of PITT and FOX alone.
Spells of such force no wizard grave
E'er framed in dark Thessalian cave,
Though his could drain the ocean dry,
And force the planets from the sky.
These spells are spent, and, spent with these,
The wine of life is on the lees.

Genius, and taste, and talent gone,
Forever tombed beneath the stone,
Where,—taming thought to human pride!—
The mighty chiefs sleep side by side.
Drop upon Fox's grave the tear,
'Twill trickle to his rival's bier;
O'er Pitt's the mournful requiem sound,
And Fox's shall the notes rebound.
The solemn echo seems to cry,—
"Here let their discord with them die;
"Speak not for those a separate doom,
"Whom Fate made brothers in the tomb,
"But search the land of living men,
"Where wilt thou find their like agen?"

Rest, ardent Spirits! till the cries
Of dying Nature bid you rise;
Not even your Britain's groans can pierce
The leaden silence of your hearse:
Then, O how impotent and vain
This grateful tributary strain!
Though not unmarked from northern clime,
Ye heard the Border Minstrel's rhyme:
His Gothic harp has o'er you rung;
The bard you deigned to praise, your deathless names has sung.

Stay yet, illusion, stay awhile,
My wildered fancy still beguile!
From this high theme how can I part,
Ere half unloaded is my heart!
For all the tears e'er sorrow drew,
And all the raptures fancy knew,
And all the keener rush of blood,
That throbs through bard in bard-like mood,
Were here a tribute mean and low,
Though all their mingled streams could flow—
Woe, wonder, and sensation high,
In one spring-tide of ecstasy.—
It will not be—it may not last—
The vision of enchantment's past:
Like frost-work in the morning ray,
The fancied fabric melts away;
Each Gothic arch, memorial stone,
And long, dim, lofty aisle are gone,
And, lingering last, deception dear,
The choir's high sounds die on my ear.
Now slow return the lonely down,
The silent pastures bleak and brown,
The farm begirt with copse-wood wild,
The gambols of each frolic child,
Mixing their shrill cries with the tone
Of Tweed's dark waters rushing on.

Prompt on unequal tasks to run,
Thus Nature disciplines her son:
Meeter, she says, for me to stray,
And waste the solitary day,
In plucking from yon fen the reed,
And watching it float down the Tweed;
Or idly list the shrilling lay
With which the milk-maid cheers her way,
Marking its cadence rise and fail,
As from the field, beneath her pail,
She trips it down the uneven dale;
Meeter for me, by yonder cairn,
The ancient shepherd's tale to learn,
Though oft he stop in rustic fear,
Lest his old legends tire the ear
Of one, who, in his simple mind,
May boast of book-learned taste refined.

But thou, my friend, canst fitly tell,
(For few have read romance so well)
How still the legendary lay
O'er poet's bosom holds its sway;
How on the ancient minstrel strain
Time lays his palsied hand in vain;
And how our hearts at doughty deeds,
By warriors wrought in steely weeds,
Still throb for fear and pity's sake:
As when the Champion of the Lake
Enters Morgana's fated house,
Or in the Chapel Perilous,
Despising spells and demons' force,
Holds converse with the unburied corse;*
Or when, Dame Ganore's grace to move
(Alas! that lawless was their love)
He sought proud Tarquin in his den,
And freed full sixty knights; or when,
A sinful man, and unconfessed,
He took the Sangreal's† holy quest,

* The romance of the Morte Arthur contains a sort of abridgment of the most celebrated adventures of the Round Table. It has the merit of being written in pure old English, and many of the wild adventures which it contains are told with a simplicity bordering upon the sublime. Several of these are referred to in the text.

† One day, when Arthur was holding a high feast with his Knights of the Round Table, the Sangreal, or vessel out of which the last passover was eaten, a precious relic, which had long remained concealed from human eyes, because of the sins of the land, suddenly appeared to him and all his chivalry. The consequence of this vision was, that all the knights took on them a solemn vow to seek the Sangreal. But, alas! it could only be revealed to a knight at once accomplished in earthly chivalry, and pure and guiltless of evil conversation. All Sir Launcelot's noble accomplishments were therefore rendered vain by his guilty intrigue with Queen Guenever, or Ganore; and in his holy quest he encountered disgraceful disasters.

And, slumbering, saw the vision high,
He might not view with waking eye.

The mightiest chiefs of British song
Scorned not such legends to prolong:
They gleam through Spenser's elfin dream,
And mix in Milton's heavenly theme;
And Dryden,* in immortal strain,
Had raised the Table Round again,
But that a ribald king and court
Bade him toil on, to make them sport;
Demanded for their niggard pay,
But for their souls, a looser lay,
Licentious satire, song, and play;
The world defrauded of the high design,
Profaned the God-given strength, and marred
the lofty line.

Warmed by such names, well may we then,
Though dwindled sons of little men,
Essay to break a feeble lance
In the fair fields of old romance;
Or seek the moated castle's cell,
Where long through talisman and spell,
While tyrants ruled, and damsels wept,
Thy Genius, Chivalry, hath slept:
There sound the harpings of the North,
Till he awake and sally forth,
On venturous quest to prick again,
In all his arms, with all his train,
Shield, lance, and brand, and plume, and scarf,
Fay, giant, dragon, squire, and dwarf,
And wizard with his wand of might,
And errant maid on palfrey white.
Around the Genius weave their spells,
Pure Love, who scarce his passion tells;
Mystery, half veiled and half revealed;
And Honour with his spotless shield;
Attention, with fixed eye; and Fear,
That loves the tale she shrinks to hear,
And gentle Courtesy; and Faith,
Unchanged by sufferings, time, or death;
And Valour, lion-mettled lord,
Leaning upon his own good sword.

Well has thy fair achievement shown,
A worthy meed may thus be won;
Ytene's† oaks—beneath whose shade
Their theme the merry minstrels made,

* Dryden's melancholy account of his projected epic poem, blasted by the selfish and sordid parsimony of his patrons, is contained in an "Essay on Satire," addressed to the earl of Dorset, and prefixed to the Translation of Juvenal.

† The New Forest in Hampshire was anciently so called.

Of Ascapart, and Bevis* bold,
And that Red King,† who, while of old
Through Boldrewood the chase he led,
By his loved huntsman's arrow bled—
Ytene's oaks have heard again
Renewed such legendary strain;
For thou hast sung, how He of Gaul,
That Amadis so famed in hall,
For Oriana, foiled in fight
The Necromancer's felon might;
And well in modern verse hast wove
Partenopex's‡ mystic love;
Hear then, attentive to my lay,
A knightly tale of Albion's elder day.

CANTO FIRST.

THE CASTLE.

I.

Day set on Norham's castled steep,§
And Tweed's fair river, broad and deep,
And Cheviot's mountains lone:
The battled towers, the Donjon Keep,‖
The loop-hole grates where captives weep,
The flanking walls that round it sweep,
In yellow lustre shone.

* The "History of Bevis of Hampton" was abridged by the poet's friend, Mr. Ellis.

† William Rufus.

‡ W. S. Rose published a poem, bearing this title, in 1808.

§ The ruinous castle of Norham (anciently called Ubbanford) is situated on the southern bank of the Tweed, about six miles above Berwick, and where that river is still the boundary between England and Scotland. The extent of its ruins, as well as its historical importance, show it to have been a place of magnificence, as well as strength. Edward I. resided there when he was created umpire of the dispute concerning the Scottish succession. It was repeatedly taken and retaken during the wars between England and Scotland; and, indeed, scarce any happened in which it had not a principal share. Norham Castle is situated on a steep bank which overhangs the river. The repeated sieges which the castle had sustained, rendered frequent repairs necessary. In 1164 it was almost rebuilt by Hugh Pudsey, bishop of Durham, who added a huge keep or donjon: notwithstanding which, King Henry II., in 1174, took the castle from the bishop, and committed the keeping of it to William de Neville. After this period it seems to have been chiefly garrisoned by the king, and considered as a royal fortress. The Greys of Chillinghame Castle were frequently the castellans, or captains of the garrison; yet, as the castle was situated in the patrimony of St. Cuthbert, the property was in the see of Durham till the Reformation.

The ruins of the castle are at present considerable, as well as picturesque. They consist of a large shattered tower, with many vaults and fragments of other edifices, enclosed within an outward wall of great circuit.

‖ It is perhaps unnecessary to remind my readers, that the *donjon*,

The warriors on the turrets high,
Moving athwart the evening sky,
Seemed forms of giant height:
Their armour, as it caught the rays,
Flashed back again the western blaze,
In lines of dazzling light.

II.

St. George's banner, broad and gay,
Now faded, as the fading ray,
Less bright, and less, was flung;
The evening gale had scarce the power
To wave it on the Donjon tower,
So heavily it hung.
The scouts had parted on their search,
The castle gates were barred;
Above the gloomy portal arch,
Timing his footsteps to a march,
The warder kept his guard,
Low humming, as he paced along,
Some ancient Border gathering song.

III.

A distant trampling sound he hears;
He looks abroad, and soon appears,
O'er Horncliff-hill, a plump* of spears,
Beneath a pennon gay;
A horseman darting from the crowd,
Like lightning from a summer cloud,
Spurs on his mettled courser proud,
Before the dark array.
Beneath the sable palisade,
That closed the castle barricade,
His bugle-horn he blew;
The warder hasted from the wall,
And warned the Captain in the hall,
For well the blast he knew;
And joyfully that Knight did call,
To sewer,† squire, and senechal.

in its proper signification, means the strongest part of a feudal castle, a high square tower, with walls of tremendous thickness, situated in the centre of the other buildings, from which, however, it was usually detached. Here, in case of the outward defences being gained, the garrison retreated to make their last stand. The donjon contained the great hall, and principal rooms of state for solemn occasions, and also the prison of the fortress; from which last circumstance we derive the modern and restricted use of the word "dungeon."

* This word is generally used for a flight of waterfowl; but is applied, by analogy, to a body of horse:—

"There is a knight of the north country,
Which leads a lusty *plump* of spears."—*Battle of Flodden.*

† The officer who set and removed the dishes, tasted them, &c.—*Halliwell, Arch. Dict.*

IV.

"Now, broach ye a pipe of Malvoisie,*
Bring pasties of the doe,
And quickly make the entrance free,
And bid my heralds ready be,
And every minstrel sound his glee,
And all our trumpets blow;
And, from the platform, spare ye not
To fire a noble salvo-shot:
Lord Marmion waits below."—
Then to the Castle's lower ward
Sped forty yeomen tall,
The iron-studded gates unbarred,
Raised the portcullis' ponderous guard,
The lofty palisade unsparred,
And let the drawbridge fall.

V.

Along the bridge Lord Marmion rode,
Proudly his red-roan charger trod,
His helm hung at the saddle-bow;
Well, by his visage, you might know
He was a stalworth knight, and keen,
And had in many a battle been;
The scar on his brown cheek revealed
A token true of Bosworth field;
His eyebrow dark, and eye of fire,
Showed spirit proud, and prompt to ire;
Yet lines of thought upon his cheek,
Did deep design and counsel speak.
His forehead, by his casque worn bare,
His thick moustache, and curly hair,
Coal-black, and grizzled here and there,
But more through toil than age;
His square-turned joints, and strength of limb,
Showed him no carpet knight so trim,
But, in close fight, a champion grim,
In camps, a leader sage.

VI.

Well was he armed from head to heel,
In mail, and plate, of Milan† steel,
But his strong helm, of mighty cost,
Was all with burnished gold embossed;
Amid the plumage of the crest,
A falcon hovered on her nest,
With wings outspread, and forward breast;
E'en such a falcon, on his shield,
Soared sable in an azure field:

* Malmsey wine.
† The artists of Milan were famous in the middle ages for their skill in armoury.

The golden legend bore aright,
"WHO CHECKS AT ME, TO DEATH IS DIGHT."*
Blue was the charger's broidered rein;
Blue ribbons decked his aching mane;
The knightly housing's† ample fold
Was velvet blue, and trapped with gold.

VII.

Behind him rode two gallant squires,
Of noble name, and knightly sires;
They burned the gilded spurs to claim;
For well could each a war-horse tame,
Could draw the bow, the sword could sway,
And lightly bear the ring away;
Nor less with courteous precepts stored,
Could dance in hall, and carve at board,
And frame love ditties passing rare,
And sing them to a lady fair.

VIII.

Four men-at-arms came at their backs,
With halberd, bill, and battle-axe:
They bore Lord Marmion's lance so strong,
And led his sumpter‡ mules along,
And ambling palfrey, when at need
Him listed ease his battle-steed.
The last, and trustiest of the four,
On high his forky pennon bore;
Like swallow's tail, in shape and hue,
Fluttered the streamer glossy blue,
Where, blazoned sable, as before,
The towering falcon seemed to soar.
Last, twenty yeomen, two and two,
In hosen black, and jerkins blue,
With falcons broidered on each breast,
Attended on their lord's behest.
Each, chosen for an archer good,
Knew hunting-craft by lake or wood;
Each one a six-foot bow could bend,
And far a cloth-yard shaft could send;
Each held a boar-spear tough and strong,
And at their belts their quivers rung.
Their dusty palfreys, and array,
Showed they had marched a weary way.

IX.

'Tis meet that I should tell you now,
How fairly armed, and ordered how,
The soldiers of the guard,

* The crest and motto of Marmion are borrowed from an old stroy
† Trappings for a horse.
‡ An animal that carried furniture upon its back.—*Halliwell.*

With musket, pike, and morion,
To welcome noble Marmion,
Stood in the Castle-yard;
Minstrels and trumpeters were there,
The gunner held his linstock* yare,†
For welcome-shot prepared—
Entered the train, and such a clang,
As then through all his turrets rang,
Old Norham never heard.

X.

The guards their morrice-pikes‡ advanced,
The trumpets flourished brave,
The cannon from the ramparts glanced,
And thundering welcome gave;
A blithe salute, in martial sort,
The minstrels well might sound,
For, as Lord Marmion crossed the court,
He scattered angels§ round.
"Welcome to Norham, Marmion!
Stout heart and open hand!
Well dost thou brook thy gallant roan,
Thou flower of English land!"—

XI.

Two pursuivants, whom tabards‖ deck,
With silver scutcheon round their neck,
Stood on the steps of stone,
By which you reach the Donjon gate,
And there, with herald pomp and state,
They hailed Lord-Marmion:
They hailed him Lord of Fontenaye,
Of Lutterward, and Scrivelbaye,
Of Tamworth tower and town;¶
And he, their courtesy to requite,
Gave them a chain of twelve marks' weight,
All as he lighted down.

*A stick with a match or lint at the end, used by gunners —*Halliwell.*

† Ready. ‡ A large pike.—*Halliwell.*

§ A gold coin, varying in value from 6*s.* 8*d.* to 10*s.*

‖ Short mantles or cloaks.—*Halliwell.*

¶ Lord Marmion, the principal character of the present romance, is entirely a fictitious personage. In earlier times, indeed, the family of Marmion, lords of Fontenay, in Normandy, was highly distinguished. Robert de Marmion, lord of Fontenay, a distinguished follower of the Conqueror, obtained a grant of the castle and town of Tamworth, and also of the manor of Scrivelby, in Lincolnshire. One, or both, of these noble possessions were held by the honourable service of being the royal champion, as the ancestors of Marmion had formerly been to the Dukes of Normandy. But after the castle and demesne of Tamworth had passed through four successive barons from Robert, the family became extinct in the person of Philip de Marmion, who died in 20th Edward I.,

"Now largesse, largesse,* Lord Marmion,
Knight of the crest of gold!
A blazoned shield, in battle won,
Ne'er guarded heart so bold."—

XII.

They marshalled him to the Castle-hall,
Where the guests stood all aside,
And loudly flourished the trumpet-call,
And the heralds loudly cried,
—"Room, lordlings, room for Lord Marmion,
With the crest and helm of gold!
Full well we know the trophies won
In the lists at Cottiswold:
There, vainly Ralph de Wilton strove
'Gainst Marmion's force to stand;
To him he lost his ladye-love,
And to the king his land.
Ourselves beheld the listed field,
A sight both sad and fair;
We saw Lord Marmion pierce his shield,
And saw his saddle bare;
We saw the victor win the crest
He wears with worthy pride;
And on the gibbet-tree, reversed,
His foeman's scutcheon tied.
Place, nobles, for the Falcon-Knight!
Room, room, ye gentlesgay,
For him who conquered in the right,
Marmion of Fontenaye!"—

XIII.

Then stepped to meet that noble lord,
Sir Hugh the Heron bold,
Baron of Twisell, and of Ford,
And Captain† of the Hold.

without issue male. He was succeeded in his castle of Tamworth by Alexander de Freville, who married Mazera, his granddaughter. Baldwin de Freville, Alexander's descendant, in the reign of Richard I., by the supposed tenure of his castle of Tamworth, claimed the office of royal champion, and to do the service appertaining; namely, on the day of coronation, to ride, completely armed, upon a barbed horse, into Westminster Hall, and there to challenge the combat against any who would gainsay the king's title. But this office was adjudged to Sir John Dymoke, to whom the manor of Scrivelby had descended by another of the co-heiresses of Robert de Marmion; and it remains in that family, whose representative is hereditary champion of England at the present day. The family and possessions of Freville have merged in the earls of Ferrars: I have not, therefore, created a new family, but only revived the titles of an old one in an imaginary personage.

* The cry by which the heralds expressed their thanks for the bounty of the nobles.

† Were accuracy of any consequence in a fictitious narrative, this castellan's name ought to have been William: for William Heron of

He led Lord Marmion to the deas,*
Raised o'er the pavement high,
And placed him in the upper place—
They feasted full and high:
The whiles a Northern harper rude
Chanted a rhyme of deadly feud,
"*How the fierce Thirwalls, and Ridleys all,*
Stout Willimondswick,
And Hard-riding Dick,
And Hughie of Hawdon, and Will o' the Wall,
Have set on Sir Albany Featherstonhaugh,
And taken his life at the Deadman's-shaw."†—
Scantly Lord Marmion's ear could brook
The harper's barbarous lay:
Yet much he praised the pains he took,
And well those pains did pay:
For lady's suit, and minstrel's strain,
By knight should ne'er be heard in vain.

XIV.

"Now, good Lord Marmion," Heron says,
"Of your fair courtesy,
I pray you bide some little space,
In this poor tower with me.
Here you may keep your arms from rust,
May breathe your war-horse well;
Seldom hath passed a week, but giust‡
Or feat of arms befell:
The Scots can rein a mettled steed,
And love to couch a spear;—
St. George! a stirring life they lead,
That have such neighbours near:
Then stay with us a little space,
Our northern wars to learn;
I pray you for your lady's grace."—
Lord Marmion's brow grew stern.

XV.

The Captain marked his altered look,
And gave a squire the sign;
A mighty wassel bowl he took,
And crowned it high with wine.
"Now pledge me here, Lord Marmion:
But first I pray thee fair,
Where hast thou left that Page of thine,
That used to serve thy cup of wine,
Whose beauty was so rare?

Ford was husband of the famous Lady Ford, whose syren charms are said to have cost James IV. of Scotland so dear.

* Or deis. The principal table in a hall, or the raised part of the floor on which it was placed.—*Halliwell.*

† This old Northumbrian ballad, quoted above, was taken down from the recitation of a woman eighty years of age, mother of one the miners of Alston-moor.

‡ A tournament.—*Halliwell.*

When last in Raby towers we met,
The boy I closely eyed,
And often marked his cheeks were wet,
With tears he fain would hide:
His was no rugged horse-boy's hand,
To burnish shield, or sharpen brand,
Or saddle battle-steed;
But meeter seemed for lady fair,
To fan her cheek, or curl her hair,
Or through embroidery, rich and rare,
The slender silk to lead:
His skin was fair, his ringlets gold,
His bosom—when he sighed,
The russet doublet's rugged fold
Could scarce repel its pride!
Say, hast thou given that lovely youth
To serve in lady's bower?
Or was the gentle page, in sooth,
A gentle paramour?"—

XVI.

Lord Marmion ill could brook such jest;
He rolled his kindling eye,
With pain his rising wrath suppressed,
Yet made a calm reply:
"That boy thou thought'st so goodly fair,
He might not brook the northern air.
More of his fate if thou wouldst learn,
I left him sick in Lindisfarn:
Enough of him.—But, Heron, say,
Why does thy lovely lady gay
Disdain to grace the hall to day?
Or has that dame, so fair and sage,
Gone on some pious pilgrimage?"—
He spoke in covert scorn, for fame
Whispered light tales of Heron's dame.

XVII.

Unmarked, at least unrecked, the taunt,
Careless the Knight replied,
"No bird, whose feathers gaily flaunt,
Delights in cage to bide:
Norham is grim, and grated close,
Hemmed in by battlement and fosse
And many a darksome tower;
And better loves my lady bright
To sit in liberty and light,
In fair Queen Margaret's bower.
We hold our greyhound in our hand,
Our falcon on our glove;
But where shall we find leash or band
For dame that loves to rove?

Let the wild falcon soar her swing,
She'll stoop when she has tired her wing."

XVIII.

"Nay, if with Royal James's bride
The lovely Lady Heron bide,
Behold me here a messenger,
Your tender greetings prompt to bear;
For, to the Scottish court addressed,
I journey at our king's behest,
And pray you, of your grace, provide
For me, and mine, a trusty guide.
I have not ridden in Scotland since
James backed the cause of that mock prince,
Warbeck,* that Flemish counterfeit,
Who on the gibbet paid the cheat.
Then did I march with Surrey's power,
What time we razed old Ayton tower."—

XIX.

"For such-like need, my lord, I trow,
Norham can find you guides enow;
For here be some have pricked as far
On Scottish ground, as to Dunbar;†
Have drunk the monks of St. Bothan's ale,
And driven the beeves of Lauderdale;
Harried the wives of Greenlaw's goods,
And given them light to set their hoods."‡—

XX.

"Now, in good sooth," Lord Marmion cried,
"Were I in warlike-wise to ride,

* The story of Perkin Warbeck, or Richard, duke of York, is well known. In 1495, he was received honourably in Scotland; and James IV., after conferring upon him in marriage his own relation, the Lady Catharine Gordon, made war on England in behalf of his pretensions. To retaliate an invasion of England, Surrey advanced into Berwickshire at the head of considerable forces, but retreated after taking the inconsiderable fortress of Ayton.

† The garrisons of the English castles of Wark, Norham, and Berwick, were, as may be easily supposed, very troublesome neighbours to Scotland. Sir Richard Maitland of Ledington, wrote a poem, called "The Blind Baron's Comfort;" when his barony of Blythe, in Lauderdale, was *harried* by Rowland Foster, the English Captain of Wark, with his company, to the number of 300 men. They spoiled the poetical knight of 5,000 sheep, 200 nolt, 30 horses and mares; the whole furniture of his house of Blythe, worth 100 pounds Scots (£3. 6*s.* 8*d.*), and everything else that was portable.

‡ This line contains a phrase by which the Borderers jocularly intimated the burning of a house. When the Maxwells, in 1685, burned the castle of Lochwood, they said they did so to give the Lady Johnstone "light to set her hood." Nor was the phrase inapplicable: for, in a letter, to which I have mislaid the reference, the earl of Northumberland, writes to the king and council, that he dressed himself, at midnight, at Warkworth, by the blaze of the neighbouring villages, burned by the Scottish marauders.

A better guard I would not lack,
Than your stout forayers at my back:
But, as in form of peace I go,
A friendly messenger, to know,
Why through all Scotland, near and far,
Their king is mustering troops for war,
The sight of plundering Border spears
Might justify suspicious fears,
And deadly feud, or thirst of spoil,
Break out in some unseemly broil:
A herald were my fitting guide;
Or friar, sworn in peace to bide;
Or pardoner, or travelling priest,
Or strolling pilgrim, at the least."—

XXI.

The Captain mused a little space,
And passed his hand across his face.
—"Fain would I find the guide you want,
But ill may spare a pursuivant,
The only men that safe can ride
Mine errands on the Scottish side.
Then, though a bishop built this fort,
Few holy brethren here resort;
Even our good chaplain, as I ween,
Since our last siege, we have not seen:
The mass he might not sing or say,
Upon one stinted meal a day;
So, safe he sat in Durham aisle,
And prayed for our success the while.
Our Norham vicar, woe betide,
Is all too well in case to ride.
The priest of Shoreswood—he could rein
The wildest war-horse in your train;
But then, no spearman in the hall
Will sooner swear, or stab, or brawl.
Friar John of Tillmouth were the man;
A blithesome brother at the can,
A welcome guest in hall and bower,
He knows each castle, town, and tower,
In which the wine and ale is good,
'Twixt Newcastle and Holy-Rood.
But that good man, as ill befalls,
Hath seldom left our castle walls,
Since on the vigil of St. Bede,
In evil hour, he crossed the Tweed,
To teach Dame Alison her creed.
Old Bughtrig found him with his wife;
And John, an enemy to strife,
Sans frock and hood, fled for his life.
The jealous churl hath deeply swore,
That, if again he ventures o'er,
He shall shrieve penitent no more.

Little he loves such risques, I know;
Yet, in your guard, perchance will go."

XXII.

Young Selby, at the fair hall-board,
Carved to his uncle, and that lord,
And reverently took up the word.
"Kind uncle, woe were we each one,
If harm should hap to Brother John.
He is a man of mirthful speech,
Can many a game and gambol teach,
Full well at tables can he play,
And sweep at bowls the stake away;
None can a lustier carol bawl,
The needfullest among us all.
When time hangs heavy in the hall,
And snow comes thick at Christmas tide,
And we can neither hunt, nor ride
A foray on the Scottish side.
The vowed revenge of Bughtrig rude,
May end in worse than loss of hood.
Let Friar John, in safety, still
In chimney-corner snore his fill,
Roast hissing crabs, or flagons swill;
Last night, to Norham there came one
Will better guide Lord Marmion."
"Nephew," quoth Heron, "by my fay,
Well hast thou spoke; say forth thy say."

XXIII.

"Here is a holy Palmer come,
From Salem first, and last from Rome;
One, that hath kissed the blessed tomb,
And visited each holy shrine,
In Araby and Palestine;
On hills of Armenie hath been;
Where Noah's ark may yet be seen;
By that Red Sea, too, hath he trod,
Which parted at the prophet's rod;
In Sinai's wilderness he saw
The Mount, where Israel heard the law,
'Mid thunder-dint, and flashing levin,
And shadows, mists, and darkness, given.
He shows St. James's cockle-shell,
Of fair Montserrat, too, can tell;
And of that Grot where Olives nod
Where, darling of each heart and eye,
From all the youth of Sicily,
Saint Rosalie* retired to God.

* "Sante Rosalia was of Palermo, and born of a very noble family; and, when very young, abhorred so much the vanities of this world, and avoided the converse of mankind, resolving to dedicate herself wholly to God Almighty, that she, by divine inspiration, forsook her

XXIV.

"To stout Saint George of Norwich merry,
Saint Thomas, too, of Canterbury,
Cuthbert of Durham and Saint Bede,
For his sins' pardon hath he prayed.
He knows the passes of the North.
And seeks far shrines beyond the Forth,
Little he eats, and long will wake,
And drinks but of the stream or lake.
This were a guide o'er moor and dale:
But, when our John hath quaffed his ale,
As little as the wind that blows,
And warms itself against his nose,
Kens he, or cares, which way he goes."—

XXV.

"Gramercy!" quoth Lord Marmion,
"Full loth were I, that Friar John,
That venerable man, for me,
Were placed in fear, or jeopardy;
If this same Palmer will me lead
From hence to Holy-Rood,
Like his good saint, I'll pay his meed,
Instead of cockle-shell, or bead,
With angels fair and good.
I love such holy ramblers; still
They know to charm a weary hill,
With song, romance, or lay:
Some jovial tale, or glee, or jest,
Some lying legend at the least,
They bring to cheer the way."

XXVI.

"Ah! noble sir," young Selby said,
And finger on his lip he laid,
"This man knows much, perchance e'en more
Than he could learn by holy lore.
Still to himself he's muttering,
And shrinks as at some unseen thing.
Last night we listened at his cell;
Strange sounds we heard, and, sooth to tell,

father's house, and never was more heard of, till her body was found in that cleft of a rock, on that almost inaccessible mountain where now the chapel is built: and they affirm she was carried up there by the hands of angels; for that place was not formerly so accessible (as now it is) in the days of the Saint; and even now it is a very bad, and steepy, and break-neck way. In this frightful place, this holy woman lived a great many years, feeding only on what she found growing on that barren mountain, and creeping into a narrow and dreadful cleft in a rock, which was always dropping wet, and was her place of retirement as well as prayer; having worn out even the rock with her knees in a certain place, which is now opened on purpose to show it to those who come here."—*Voyage to Sicily and Malta*, by Mr. John Dryden, (son to the poet,) p. 107.

He murmured on till morn, howe'er
No living mortal could be near.
Sometimes I thought I heard it plain
As other voices spoke again.
I cannot tell—I like it not—
Friar John hath told us it is wrote,
No conscience clear, and void of wrong,
Can rest awake, and pray so long.
Himself still sleeps before his beads
Have marked ten aves and two creeds."*—

XXVII.

"Let pass," quoth Marmion; "by my fay
This man shall guide me on my way,
Although the great arch-fiend and he
Had sworn themselves of company;
So please you, gentle youth, to call
This Palmer to the castle-hall."
The summoned Palmer came in place;
His sable cowl o'erhung his face;
In his black mantle was he clad,
With Peter's keys,† in cloth of red,
On his broad shoulders wrought;
The scallop shell his cap did deck;
The crucifix around his neck
Was from Loretta brought;
His sandals were with travel tore,
Staff, budget, bottle, scrip, he wore;
The faded palm-branch in his hand,
Showed pilgrim from the Holy Land.

XXVIII.

When as the Palmer came in hall,
Nor lord, nor knight, was there more tall,
Or had a statelier step withal,
Or looked more high and keen;
For no saluting did he wait,
But strode across the hall of state,
And fronted Marmion where he sate,
As he his peer had been.
But his gaunt frame was worn with toil;
His cheek was sunk, alas! the while;
And when he struggled at a smile,
His eye looked haggard wild.

* Friar John understood the soporific virtue of his beads and breviary, as well as his namesake in Rabelais.

† A *Palmer*, opposed to a *Pilgrim*, was one who made it his sole business to visit different holy shrines, travelling incessantly, and subsisting by charity; whereas the pilgrim retired to his usual home and occupations, when he had paid his devotions at the particular spot which was the object of his pilgrimage. The palmers seem to have been the *Quæstionarii* of the ancient Scottish canons 1242 and 1296.

Poor wretch! the mother that him bare,
If she had been in presence there,
In his wan face, and sun-burned hair,
She had not known her child.
Danger, long travel, want, or woe,
Soon change the form that best we know—
For deadly fear can time outgo,
And blanch at once the hair;
Hard toil can roughen form and face,
And want can quench the eye's bright grace.
Nor does old age a wrinkle trace,
More deeply than despair.
Happy whom none of these befall,
But this poor Palmer knew them all.

XXIX.

Lord Marmion then his boon did ask;
The Palmer took on him the task,
So he would march with morning tide,
To Scottish court to be his guide.
—"But I have solemn vows to pay,
And may not linger by the way,
To fair Saint Andrew's bound,
Within the ocean-cave to pray,
Where good Saint Rule* his holy lay,
From midnight to the dawn of day,
Sung to the billow's sound;
Thence to Saint Fillan's† blessed well,
Whose spring can frenzied dreams dispel,
And the crazed brain restore:—

* St. Regulus (*Scotticé*, St. Rule), a monk of Patræ, in Achaia, warned by a vision, is said, A.D. 370. to have sailed westward, until he landed at St. Andrew's, in Scotland, where he founded a chapel and tower. The latter is still standing; and, though we may doubt the precise date of its foundation, is certainly one of the most ancient edifices in Scotland. A cave, nearly fronting the ruinous castle of the archbishops of St. Andrew's, bears the name of this religious person. It is difficult of access; and the rock in which it is hewed is washed by the German Ocean. It is nearly round, about ten feet in diameter, and the same in height. On one side is a sort of altar: on the other, an aperture into an inner den, where the miserable ascetic who inhabited this dwelling probably slept. At full tide, egress and regress are hardly practicable. As Regulus first colonized the metropolitan see of Scotland, and converted the inhabitants in the vicinity, he has some reason to complain that the ancient name of Kilrule (*Cella Reguli*) should have been superseded, even in favour of the tutelar saint of Scotland. The reason of the change was, that St. Rule is said to have brought to Scotland the reliques of St. Andrew.

† St. Fillan was a Scottish saint of some reputation. Although popery is, with us, matter of abomination, yet the common people still retain some of the superstitions connected with it. There are, in Perthshire, several wells and springs dedicated to St. Fillan, which are still places of pilgrimage and offerings, even among the Protestants. They are held powerful in cases of madness; and, in some of very late occurrence, lunatics have been left all night bound to

Saint Mary grant, that cave or spring
Could back to peace my bosom bring,
Or bid it throb no more!"—

XXX.

And now the midnight draught of sleep,
Where wine and spices richly steep,
In massive bowl of silver deep,
The page presents on knee.
Lord Marmion drank a fair good rest,
The Captain pledged his noble guest,
The cup went through among the rest,
Who drained it merrily;
Alone the Palmer passed it by,
Though Selby pressed him courteously.
This was the sign the feast was o'er;
It hushed the merry wassel roar,
The minstrels ceased to sound.
Soon in the castle nought was heard,
But the slow footstep of the guard,
Pacing his sober round.

XXXI.

With early dawn Lord Marmion rose:
And first the chapel doors unclose;
Then, after morning rites were done,
(A hasty mass from Friar John,)
And knight and squire had broke their fast,
On rich substantial repast,
Lord Marmion's bugle blew to horse.
Then came the stirrup-cup* in course;
Between the Baron and his host,
No point of courtesy was lost:
High thanks were by Lord Marmion paid,
Solemn excuse the Captain made,
Till, filing from the gate, had passed
That noble train, their Lord the last.
Then loudly rung the trumpet call;
Thundered the cannon from the wall,
And shook the Scottish shore;
Around the castle eddied, slow,
Volumes of smoke as white as snow,
And hid its turrets hoar;
Till they rolled forth upon the air,
And met the river breezes there,
Which gave again the prospect fair.

the holy stone, in confidence that the saint would cure and unloose them before morning.

* A parting cup taken on horseback before leaving.—*Halliwell.*

INTRODUCTION TO CANTO SECOND.

TO THE REV. JOHN MARRIOT, M.A.

Ashestiel, Ettricke Forest.

THE scenes are desert now, and bare,
Where flourished once a forest fair,*
When these waste glens with copse were lined,
And peopled with the hart and hind.
Yon thorn—perchance whose prickly spears
Have fenced him for three hundred years,
While fell around his green compeers—
Yon lonely thorn, would he could tell
The changes of his parent dell,
Since he, so grey and stubborn now,
Waved in each breeze a sapling bough;
Would he could tell how deep the shade,
A thousand mingled branches made;
How broad the shadows of the oak,
How clung the rowan† to the rock,
And through the foliage showed his head,
With narrow leaves, and berries red;
What pines on every mountain sprung,
O'er every dell what birches hung,
In every breeze what aspens shook,
What alders shaded every brook!

"Here, in my shade," methinks he'd say,
"The mighty stag at noontide lay;
The wolf I've seen, a fiercer game,
(The neighbouring dingle bears his name,)
With lurching‡ step around me prowl,
And stop against the moon to howl;
The mountain boar, on battle set,
His tusks upon my stem would whet;
While doe and roe, and red-deer good,
Have bounded by through gay green-wood.
Then oft, from Newark's riven tower,
Sallied a Scottish monarch's power:
A thousand vassals mustered round,
With horse, and hawk, and horn, and hound;

* Ettricke Forest, now a range of mountainous sheep-walks, was anciently reserved for the pleasure of the royal chase. Since it was disparked, the wood has been, by degrees, almost totally destroyed; although, wherever protected from the sheep, copses soon arise without any planting. When the king hunted there, he often summoned the array of the country to meet and assist his sport.

† The mountain ash. ‡ Stealthy.

And I might see the youth intent,
Guard every pass with cross-bow bent;
And through the brake the rangers stalk,
And falc'ners hold the ready hawk;
And foresters, in green-wood trim,
Lead in the leash the gaze-hounds grim,
Attentive, as the bratchet's* bay
From the dark covert drove the prey,
To slip them as he broke away.
The startled quarry bounds amain,
As fast the gallant greyhounds strain;
Whistles the arrow from the bow,
Answers the harquebuss below;
While all the rocking hills reply,
To hoof-clang, hound, and hunters' cry,
And bugles ringing lightsomely."—

Of such proud huntings, many tales
Yet linger in our lonely dales,
Up pathless Ettricke, and on Yarrow,
Where erst the Outlaw† drew his arrow.
But not more blithe that sylvan court,
Than we have been at humbler sport;
Though small our pomp, and mean our game,
Our mirth, dear Marriot, was the same.
Remember'st thou my greyhounds true?
O'er holt, or hill, there never flew,
From slip, or leash, there never sprang,
More fleet of foot, or sure of fang.
Nor dull, between each merry chase,
Passed by the intermitted space;
For we had fair resource in store,
In Classic, and in Gothic lore:
We marked each memorable scene,
And held poetic talk between;
Nor hill, nor brook, we paced along,
But had its legend, or its song.
All silent now—for now are still
Thy bowers, untenanted Bowhill!
No longer, from thy mountains dun,
The yeoman hears the well-known gun,
And, while his honest heart glows warm,
At thought of his paternal farm,
Round to his mates a brimmer fills,
And drinks, "The Chieftain of the Hills!"

* Slow-hound.

† The tale of the outlaw Murray, who held out Newark Castle, near Ettricke Forest, against the king, may be found in the "Border Minstrelsy," vol. i. In the Macfarlane MS., among other causes of James the Fifth's charter to the burgh, is mentioned, that the citizens assisted him to suppress this dangerous outlaw.

No fairy forms, in Yarrow's bowers,
Trip o'er the walks, or tend the flowers,
Fair as the elves whom Janet saw,
By moonlight dance on Carterhaugh;
No youthful baron's left to grace
The Forest-Sheriff's lonely chase,
And ape, in manly step and tone,
The majesty of Oberon:
And she is gone, whose lovely face
Is but her least and lowest grace;
Though, if to Sylphid Queen 'twere given,
To show our earth the charms of heaven,
She could not glide along the air,
With form more light, or face more fair.
No more the widow's deafened ear
Grows quick, that lady's step to hear:
At noontide she expects her not,
Nor busies her to trim the cot;
Pensive she turns her humming wheel,
Or pensive cooks her orphan's meal;
Yet blesses, ere she deals their bread,
The gentle hand by which they're fed.

From Yair,—which hills so closely bind,
Scarce can the Tweed his passage find,
Though much he fret, and chafe, and toil,
Till all his eddying currents boil,—
Her long-descended lord is gone,
And left us by the stream alone.
And much I miss those sportive boys,*
Companions of my mountain joys,
Just at the age, 'twixt boy and youth,
When thought is speech, and speech is truth.
Close to my side, with what delight,
They pressed to hear of Wallace wight,
When, pointing to his airy mound†
I called his ramparts holy ground!
Kindled their brows to hear me speak,
And I have smiled, to feel my cheek,
Despite the difference of our years,
Return again the glow of theirs.
Ah, happy boys! such feelings pure,
They will not, cannot long endure;
Condemned to stem the world's rude tide,
You may not linger by the side;
For Fate shall thrust you from the shore,
And Passion ply the sail and oar.

* In these and the following lines reference is made to neighbours and friends of the poet.

† There is, on a high mountainous ridge above the farm of Ashestiel, a fosse called Wallace's Trench.

Yet cherish the remembrance still,
Of the lone mountain, and the rill;
For trust, dear boys, the time will come,
When fiercer transport shall be dumb
And you will think, right frequently,
But, well I hope, without a sigh,
On the free hours that we have spent,
Together, on the brown hill's bent.*

When, musing on companions gone,
We doubly feel ourselves alone,
Something, my friend, we yet may gain,
There is a pleasure in this pain:
It soothes the love of lonely rest,
Deep in each gentler heart impressed.
'Tis silent amid worldly toils,
And stifled soon by mental broils;
But, in a bosom thus prepared,
Its still small voice is often heard,
Whispering a mingled sentiment,
'Twixt resignation and content.
Oft in my mind such thoughts awake,
By lone St. Mary's silent lake;†
Thou know'st it well,—nor fen, nor sedge,
Pollute the pure lake's crystal edge;
Abrupt and sheer, the mountains sink
At once upon the level brink;
And just a trace of silver sand
Marks where the water meets the land.
Far in the mirror, bright and blue,
Each hill's huge outline you may view;
Shaggy with heath, but lonely, bare,
Nor tree, nor bush, nor brake is there,
Save where, of land, yon slender line
Bears thwart the lake the scattered pine.
Yet even this nakedness has power,
And aids the feeling of the hour:
Nor thicket, dell, nor copse you spy,
Where living thing concealed might lie;

*The declivity of a hill.

†This beautiful sheet of water forms the reservoir from which the Yarrow takes its source. It is connected with a smaller lake, called the Loch of the Lowes, and surrounded by mountains. In the winter it is still frequented by flights of wild swans; hence my friend Mr. Wordsworth's lines:—

"The swan on sweet St. Mary's lake
Floats double, swan and shadow."

Near the lower extremity of the lake are the ruins of Dryhope Tower, the birth-place of Mary Scott, daughter of Philip Scott of Dryhope, and famous by the traditional name of the Flower of Yarrow. She was married to Walter Scott of Harden, no less renowned for his depredations, than his bride for her beauty.

Nor point, retiring, hides a dell,
Where swain, or woodman lone, might dwell;
There's nothing left to fancy's guess,
You see that all is loneliness:
And silence aids—though these steep hills
Send to the lake a thousand rills;
In summer tide, so soft they weep,
The sound but lulls the ear asleep;
Your horse's hoof-tread sounds too rude,
So stilly is the solitude.

Nought living meets the eye or ear,
But well I ween the dead are near;
For though, in feudal strife, a foe
Hath laid Our Lady's* chapel low,
Yet still, beneath the hallowed soil,
The peasant rests him from his toil,
And, dying, bids his bones be laid
Where erst his simple fathers prayed.

If age had tamed the passions' strife,
And fate had cut my ties to life,
Here, have I thought, 'twere sweet to dwell,
And rear again the chaplain's cell,
Like that same peaceful hermitage,
Where Milton† longed to spend his age.
'Twere sweet to mark the setting day,
On Bourhope's lonely top decay;
And, as it faint and feeble died
On the broad lake, and mountain's side,
To say, "Thus pleasures fade away;
Youth, talents, beauty, thus decay,
And leave us dark, forlorn, and grey;"—
Then gaze on Dryhope's ruined tower,
And think on Yarrow's faded Flower:
And when that mountain-sound I heard,
Which bids us be for storm prepared,

* The chapel of St. Mary of the Lowes *(de Lacubus)* was situated on the eastern side of the lake to which it gives name. It was injured by the clan of Scott, in a feud with the Cranstouns, but continued to be a place of worship during the seventeenth century. Being in a high situation, it commanded a full view of the lake, with the opposite mountain of Bourhope, belonging, with the lake itself, to Lord Napier. On the left hand is the tower of Dryhope, mentioned in the preceding note.

† "And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth show,
And every herb that sips the dew;
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain."—*Il Penseroso.*

The distant rustling of his wings,
As up his force the Tempest brings,
'Twere sweet, ere yet his terrors rave,
To sit upon the Wizard's grave;
That Wizard Priest's* whose bones are thrust
From company of holy dust;
On which no sunbeam ever shines—
(So superstition's creed divines,)
Thence view the lake, with sullen roar,
Heave her broad billows to the shore;
And mark the wild swans mount the gale,
Spread wide through mist their snowy sail,
And ever stoop again, to lave
Their bosoms on the surging wave:
Then, when against the driving hail
No longer might my plaid avail,
Back to my lonely home retire,
And light my lamp, and trim my fire:
There ponder o'er some mystic lay,
Till the wild tale had all its sway,
And in the bittern's distant shriek
I heard unearthly voices speak,
And thought the Wizard Priest was come,
To claim again his ancient home!
And bade my busy fancy range,
To frame him fitting shape and strange,
Till from the task my brow I cleared,
And smiled to think that I had feared.

But, chief, 'twere sweet to think such life,
(Though but escape from fortune's strife,)
Something most matchless good and wise.
A great and grateful sacrifice;
And deem each hour to musing given,
A step upon the road to heaven.

Yet him, whose heart is ill at ease,
Such peaceful solitudes displease:
He loves to drown his bosom's jar
Amid the elemental war:
And my black Palmer's choice had been
Some ruder and more savage scene,
Like that which frowns round dark Loch-skene,†

* At one corner of the burial-ground of the demolished chapel, but without its precincts, is a small mound, called *Binram's Corse*, where tradition deposits the remains of a necromantic priest, the former tenant of the chaplainry.

† A mountain lake, of considerable size, at the head of the Moffat-water. The character of the scenery is uncommonly savage; and the earn, or Scottish eagle, has, for many ages, built its nest yearly upon an islet in the lake. Loch-skene discharges itself into a brook, which, after a short and precipitate course, falls from a cataract of immense height and gloomy grandeur, called, from its appearance,

There eagles scream from isle to shore:
Down all the rocks the torrents roar;
O'er the black waves incessant driven,
Dark mists infect the summer heaven;
Through the rude barriers of the lake,
Away its hurrying waters break,
Faster and whiter dash and curl,
Till down yon dark abyss they hurl.
Rises the fog-smoke white as snow,
Thunders the viewless stream below,
Diving, as if condemned to lave
Some demon's subterranean cave,
Who, prisoned by enchanter's spell,
Shakes the dark rock with groan and yell.
And well that Palmer's form and mien
Had suited with the stormy scene,
Just on the edge, straining his ken
To view the bottom of the den,
Where, deep, deep down, and far within,
Toils with the rocks the roaring linn;
Then, issuing forth one foamy wave,
And wheeling round the Giant's Grave,
White as the snowy charger's tail,
Drives down the pass of Moffatdale.

Marriot,* thy harp, on Isis strung,
To many a Border theme has rung:
Then list to me, and thou shalt know
Of this mysterious Man of Woe.

CANTO SECOND.

THE CONVENT.

I.

THE breeze, which swept away the smoke,
Round Norham Castle rolled;
When all the loud artillery spoke,
With lightning-flash, and thunder-stroke,
As Marmion left the Hold.
It curled not Tweed alone, that breeze;
For, far upon Northumbrian seas,
It freshly blew, and strong,

the "Grey Mare's Tail." The "Giant's Grave," afterwards mentioned, is a sort of trench which bears that name, a little way from the foot of the cataract. It has the appearance of a battery designed to command the pass.

* Mr. Marriot wrote several ballads, which are published in the "Border Minstrelsy."

Where, from high Whitby's cloistered pile,
Bound to Saint Cuthbert's Holy Isle,*
It bore a bark along.
Upon the gale she stooped her side,
And bounded o'er the swelling tide,
As she were dancing home;
The merry seamen laughed, to see
Their gallant ship so lustily
Furrow the green sea-foam.
Much joyed they in their honoured freight;
For, on the deck, in chair of state,
The Abbess of Saint Hilda placed,
With five fair nuns, the galley graced.

II.

'Twas sweet to see these holy maids,
Like birds escaped to green-wood shades,
Their first flight from the cage,
How timid, and how curious too,
For all to them was strange and new,
And all the common sights they view,
Their wonderment engage,
One eyed the shrouds and swelling sail,
With many a benedicite;
One at the rippling surge grew pale,
And would for terror pray;
Then shrieked, because the sea-dog, nigh
His round black head, and sparkling eye,
Reared o'er the foaming spray;

* The Abbey of Whitby, in the archdeaconry of Cleveland, on the coast of Yorkshire, was founded A.D. 657, in consequence of a vow of Oswy, king of Northumberland. It contained both monks and nuns of the Benedictine order; but, contrary to what was usual in such establishments, the abbess was superior to the abbot. The monastery was afterwards ruined by the Danes, and rebuilt by William Percy, in the reign of the Conqueror. There were no nuns there in Henry the Eighth's time, nor long before it. The ruins of Whitby Abbey are very magnificent. Lindisfarne, an isle on the coast of Northumberland, was called Holy Island, from the sanctity of its ancient monastery, and from its having been the episcopal seat of the see of Durham during the early ages of British Christianity. A succession of holy men held that office; but their merits were swallowed up in the superior fame of St. Cuthbert, who was sixth bishop of Durham, and who bestowed the name of his "patrimony" upon the extensive property of the see. The ruins of the monastery upon Holy Island betoken great antiquity. Lindisfarne is not properly an island, but rather, as the venerable Bede has termed it, a semi-isle; for, although surrounded by the sea at full tide, the ebb leaves the sands dry between it and the opposite coast of Northumberland, from which it is about three miles distant. The arches are, in general, strictly Saxon; and the pillars which support them, short, strong, and massy. In some places, however, there are pointed windows, which indicate that the building has been repaired at a period long subsequent to the original foundation. The exterior ornaments of the building, being of a light sandy stone, have been wasted, as described in the text.

And one would still adjust her veil,
Disordered by the summer gale,
(Perchance lest some more worldly eye
Her dedicated charms might spy;)
Perchance, because such action graced
Her fair-turned arm and slender waist.
Light was each simple bosom there,
Save two, who ill might pleasure share,—
The Abbess and the Novice Clare.

III.

The Abbess was of noble blood,
But early took the veil and hood,
Ere upon life she cast a look,
Or knew the world that she forsook.
Fair too she was, and kind had been
As she was fair, but ne'er had seen
For her a timid lover sigh,
Nor knew the influence of her eye;
Love, to her ear, was but a name,
Combined with vanity and shame;
Her hopes, her fears, her joys, were all
Bounded within the cloister-wall:
The deadliest sin her mind could reach
Was of monastic rule the breach;
And her ambition's highest aim,
To emulate Saint Hilda's fame.
For this she gave her ample dower,
To raise the convent's eastern tower;
For this, with carving rare and quaint,
She decked the chapel of the saint,
And gave the relique-shrine of cost,
With ivory and gems embossed.
The poor her convent's bounty blessed,
The pilgrim in its halls found rest.

IV.

Black was her garb, her rigid rule
Reformed on Benedictine school;
Her cheek was pale, her form was spare,
Vigils, and penitence austere,
Had early quenched the light of youth,
But gentle was the dame in sooth;
Though, vain of her religious sway,
She loved to see her maids obey,
Yet nothing stern was she in cell,
And the nuns loved their Abbess well.
Sad was this voyage to the dame;
Summoned to Lindisfarne, she came,
There, with Saint Cuthbert's Abbot old
And Tynemouth's Prioress, to hold
A chapter of Saint Benedict,
For inquisition stern and strict,

On two apostates from the faith,
And, if need were, to doom to death.

V.

Nought say I here of Sister Clare,
Save this, that she was young and fair;
As yet a novice unprofessed,
Lovely and gentle, but distressed.
She was betrothed to one now dead,
Or worse, who had dishonoured fled.
Her kinsmen bade her give her hand
To one, who loved her for her land:
Herself, almost heart-broken now,
Was bent to take the vestal vow,
And shroud, within Saint Hilda's gloom,
Her blasted hopes and withered bloom.

VI.

She sate upon the galley's prow,
And seemed to mark the waves below;
Nay seemed, so fixed her look and eye,
To count them as they glided by.
She saw them not—'twas seeming all—
Far other scene her thoughts recall,—
A sun-scorched desert, waste and bare,
Nor wave, nor breezes, murmured there;
There saw she, where some careless hand
O'er a dead corpse had heaped the sand,
To hide it till the jackals come
To tear it from the scanty tomb.—
See what a woeful look was given,
As she raised up her eyes to heaven!

VII.

Lovely, and gentle, and distressed—
These charms might tame the fiercest breast:
Harpers have sung, and poets told,
That he, in fury uncontrolled,
The shaggy monarch of the wood,
Before a virgin, fair and good,
Hath pacified his savage mood.
But passions in the human frame
Oft put the lion's rage to shame;
And jealousy, by dark intrigue,
With sordid avarice in league,
Had practised, with their bowl and knife,
Against the mourner's harmlesss life.
This crime was charged 'gainst those who lay
Prisoned in Cuthbert's islet grey.

VIII.

And now the vessel skirts the strand
Of mountainous Northumberland;

Towns, towers, and halls, successive rise,
And catch the nuns' delighted eyes.
Monk-Wearmouth soon behind them lay,
And Tynemouth's priory and bay;
They marked, amid her trees, the hall
Of lofty Seaton-Delaval;
They saw the Blythe and Wansbeck floods
Rush to the sea through sounding woods;
They passed the tower of Widderington,*
Mother of many a valiant son;
At Coquet-isle their beads they tell,
To the good Saint who owned the cell;
Then did the Aln attention claim,
And Warkworth, proud of Percy's name;
And next, they crossed themselves, to hear
The whitening breakers sound so near,
Where, boiling through the rocks, they roar
On Dunstanborough's caverned shore;
Thy tower, proud Bamborough, marked they here.
King Ida's castle, huge and square,
From its tall rock look grimly down,
And on the swelling ocean frown;
Then from the coast they bore away,
And reached the Holy Island's bay.

IX.

The tide did now its flood-mark gain,
And girdled in the Saint's domain;
For with the flow and ebb, its style,
Varies from continent to isle;
Dry-shod, o'er sands, twice every day,
The pilgrims to the shrine find way;
Twice every day, the waves efface
Of staves and sandalled feet the trace.
As to the port the galley flew,
Higher and higher rose to view
The Castle, with its battled walls,
The ancient Monastery's halls,
A solemn, huge, and dark-red pile,
Placed on the margin of the isle.

X.

In Saxon strength that Abbey frowned,
With massive arches broad and round,
That rose alternate, row and row
On ponderous columns, short and low,
Built ere the art was known,
By pointed aisle, and shafted stalk,
The arcades of an alleyed walk
To emulate in stone.

* See notes to Chevy Chase in "Percy's Reliques."

On the deep walls, the heathen Dane
Had poured his impious rage in vain;
And needful was such strength to these,
Exposed to the tempestuous seas,
Scourged by the wind's eternal sway,
Open to rovers fierce as they,
Which could twelve hundred years withstand
Winds, waves, and northern pirates' hand.
Not but that portions of the pile,
Rebuilded in a later style,
Showed where the spoiler's hand had been;
Not but the wasting sea-breeze keen
Had worn the pillar's carving quaint,
And mouldered in his niche the saint,
And rounded, with consuming power,
The pointed angles of each tower:
Yet still entire the Abbey stood,
Like veteran, worn, but unsubdued.

XI.

Soon as they neared his turrets strong,
The maidens raised Saint Hilda's song,
And with the sea-wave and the wind,
Their voices, sweetly shrill, combined,
And made harmonious close;
Then, answering from the sandy shore,
Half-drowned amid the breakers' roar,
According chorus rose:
Down to the haven of the Isle,
The monks and nuns in order file,
From Cuthbert's cloisters grim;
Banner, and cross, and reliques there,
To meet Saint Hilda's maids, they bare;
And, as they caught the sounds on air,
They echoed back the hymn.
The islanders, in joyous mood,
Rushed emulously through the flood
To hale* the bark to land;
Conspicuous by her veil and hood,
Signing the cross, the Abbess stood,
And blessed them with her hand.

XII.

Suppose we now the welcome said,
Suppose the Convent banquet made:
All through the holy dome,
Through cloister, aisle, and gallery,
Wherever vestal maid might pry,
Nor risk to meet unhallowed eye,
The stranger sisters roam:

* To draw.

Till fell the evening damp with dew,
And the sharp sea-breeze coldly blew,
For there, even summer night is chill;
Then, having strayed and gazed their fill,
They closed around the fire;
And all, in turn, essayed to paint
The rival merits of their saint,
A theme that ne'er can tire
A holy maid; for, be it known,
That their saint's honour is their own.

XIII.

Then Whitby's nuns exulting told,
How to their house three barons bold
Must menial service do;*
While horns blow out a note of shame,
And monks cry "Fye upon your name!
In wrath, for loss of sylvan game,
Saint Hilda's priest ye slew."—
"This, on Ascension-day, each year,
While labouring on our harbour-pier,
Must Herbert, Bruce, and Percy hear."
They told, how in their convent cell
A Saxon princess once did dwell,
The lovely Edelfled;†
And how, of thousand snakes, each one
Was changed into a coil of stone,
When holy Hilda prayed;
Themselves, within their holy bound,
Their stony folds had often found.
They told, how sea-fowls' pinions fail,
As over Whitby's towers they sail,
And, sinking down, with flutterings faint,
They do their homage to the saint.

XIV.

Nor did St. Cuthbert's daughters fail
To vie with these in holy tale;
His body's resting-place, of old,‡
How oft their patron changed, they told;

* A popular account of this curious service is given in "A True Account," printed and circulated at Whitby.

† She was the daughter of King Oswy, who, in gratitude to heaven for the great victory which he won in 655, against Penda, the pagan king of Mercia, dedicated Edelfleda, then but a year old, to the service of God in the monastery of Whitby, of which St. Hilda was then abbess. She afterwards adorned the place of her education with great magnificence.

‡ St. Cuthbert was, in the choice of his sepulchre, one of the most mutable and unreasonable saints in the calendar. He died A.D. 688, in a hermitage upon the Farne Islands, having resigned the bishopric of Lindisfarne, or Holy Island, about two years before. His body was brought to Lindisfarne, where it remaind until a descent of the Danes, about 793, when the monastery was nearly destroyed. The

How, when the rude Dane burned their pile,
The monks fled forth from Holy Isle;
O'er northern mountain, marsh, and moor,
From sea to sea, from shore to shore,
Seven years Saint Cuthbert's corpse they bore:
They rested them in fair Melrose;
But though, alive, he loved it well,
Not there his reliques might repose;
For, wondrous tale to tell!
In his stone coffin forth he rides,
(A ponderous bark for river tides)
Yet light as gossamer it glides,
Downward to Tillmouth cell.
Nor long was his abiding there,
For southward did the saint repair;
Chester-le-Street, and Rippon, saw
His holy corpse, ere Wardilaw
Hailed him with joy and fear;
And, after many wanderings passed,
He chose his lordly seat at last,
Where his cathedral, huge and vast,
Looks down upon the Wear:
There, deep in Durham's Gothic shade,
His reliques are in secret laid;
But none may know the place,
Save of his holiest servants three,
Deep sworn to solemn secrecy,
Who share that wondrous grace.

XV.

Who may his miracles declare!
Even Scotland's dauntless king, and heir,
(Although with them they led
Galwegians, wild as ocean's gale,

monks fled to Scotland, with what they deemed their chief treasure, the reliques of St. Cuthbert. The saint was, however, a most capricious fellow-traveller; which was the more intolerable, as, like Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea, he journeyed upon the shoulders of his companions. They paraded him through Scotland for several years, and came as far west as Whithern, in Galloway, whence they attempted to sail for Ireland, but were driven back by tempests. He at length made a halt at Norham; thence he went to Melrose, where he remained stationary for a short time, and then caused himself to be launched upon the Tweed in a stone coffin, which landed him at Tillmouth, in Northumberland. From Tillmouth, Cuthbert wandered into Yorkshire; and at length made a long stay at Chester-le-Street, to which the bishop's see was transferred. At length, the Danes continuing to infest the country, the monks removed to Rippon for a season; and it was in returning thence to Chester-le-Street, that, in passing through a forest called Dunholme, the saint and his carriage became immovable at a place named Wardlaw, or Wardilaw. Here the saint chose his place of residence; and all who have seen Durham must admit, that if difficult in his choice, he evinced taste in at length fixing it.

And Lodon's knights, all sheathed in mail,
And the bold men of Teviotdale,)
Before his standard fled.*
'Twas he, to vindicate his reign,
Edged Alfred's falchion on the Dane,
And turned the Conqueror back again,†
When, with his Norman bowyer‡ band,
He came to waste Northumberland.

XVI.

But fain Saint Hilda's nuns would learn,
If, on a rock by Lindisfarne,
Saint Cuthbert sits, and toils to frame
The sea-born beads that bear his name:§
Such tales had Whitby's fishers told,
And said they might his shape behold,
And hear his anvil sound;
A deadened clang,—a huge dim form,
Seen but, and heard, when gathering storm
And night were closing round.
But this, as tale of idle fame,
The nuns of Lindisfarne disclaim.

XVII.

While round the fire such legends go,
Far different was the scene of woe,
Where, in a secret aisle beneath,
Council was held of life and death.

* Refers to the battle of Northallerton, or Cuton-moor, 1138.

† Cuthbert had no great reason to spare the Danes, when opportunity offered. Accordingly, I find, in Simeon of Durham, that the saint appeared in a vision to Alfred, when lurking in the marshes of Glastonbury, and promised him assistance and victory over his heathen enemies; a consolation, which, as was reasonable, Alfred, after the victory of Ashendown, rewarded, by a royal offering at the shrine of the saint. As to William the Conqueror, the terror spread before his army, when he marched to punish the revolt of the Northumbrians, in 1096, had forced the monks to fly once more to Holy Island with the body of the saint. It was, however, replaced before William left the North; and, to balance accounts, the Conqueror having intimated an indiscreet curiosity to view the saint's body, he was, while in the act of commanding the shrine to be opened, seized with heat and sickness, accompanied with such a panic-terror, that, notwithstanding there was a sumptuous dinner prepared for him, he fled without eating a morsel (which the monkish historian seems to have thought no small part both of the miracle and the penance), and never drew his bridle until he got to the river Tees.

‡ Of bowmen.

§ Although we do not learn that Cuthbert was, during his life, such an artificer as Dunstan, his brother in sanctity, yet, since his death, he has acquired the reputation of forging those *Entrochi* which are found among the rocks of Holy Island, and pass there by the name of St. Cuthbert's Beads. While at this task, he is supposed to sit during the night upon a certain rock, and use another as his anvil. This story was perhaps credited in former days; at least, the saint's legend contains some not more probable

It was more dark and lone, that vault,
Than the worst dungeon cell;
Old Colwulf* built it, for his fault,
In penitence to dwell,
When he, for cowl and beads, laid down
The Saxon battle-axe and crown.
This den, which, chilling every sense
Of feeling, hearing, sight,
Was called the Vault of Penitence,
Excluding air and light,
Was, by the prelate Sexhelm, made
A place of burial, for such dead
As, having died in mortal sin,
Might not be laid the church within.
'Twas now a place of punishment;
Whence if so loud a shriek were sent
As reached the upper air,
The hearers blessed themselves, and said,
The spirits of the sinful dead
Bemoaned their torments there.

XVIII.

But though, in the monastic pile,
Did of this penitential aisle
Some vague tradition go,
Few only, save the Abbot, knew
Where the place lay; and still more few
Were those, who had from him the clew
To that dread vault to go.
Victim and executioner
Were blind-fold when transported there.
In low dark rounds the arches hung,
From the rude rock the side-walls sprung;
The grave-stones, rudely sculptured o'er,
Half sunk in earth, by time half wore,
Were all the pavement of the floor;
The mildew-drops fell one by one,
With tinkling plash, upon the stone.
A cresset,† in an iron chain,
Which served to light this drear domain,
With damp and darkness seemed to strive
As if it scarce might keep alive;
And yet it dimly served to show,
The awful conclave met below.

* Ceolwulf, or Colwulf, king of Northumberland, flourished in the eighth century. He was a man of some learning; for the venerable Bede dedicates to him his "Ecclesiastical History." He abdicated the throne about 737, and retired to Holy Island, where he died in the odour of sanctity. These penitential vaults were the *Geissel-gewölble* of German convents.

† An antique chandelier.

XIX.

There, met to doom in secrecy,
Were placed the heads of convents three;
All servants of Saint Benedict,
The statutes of whose order strict
On iron table lay;
In long black dress, on seats of stone,
Behind were these three judges shown,
By the pale cresset's ray:
The Abbess of Saint Hilda's, there
Sate for a space with visage bare,
Until, to hide her bosom's swell,
And tear-drops that for pity fell,
She closely drew her veil.
Yon shrouded figure as I guess,
By her proud mien and flowing dress,
Is Tynemouth's haughty Prioress,*
And she with awe looks pale:
And he, that Ancient Man, whose sight
Has long been quenched by age's night,
Upon whose wrinkled brow alone,
Nor ruth, nor mercy's trace is shown,
Whose look is hard and stern,—
Saint Cuthbert's Abbot is his style;
For sanctity called, through the isle,
The Saint of Lindisfarne.

XX.

Before them stood a guilty pair;
But, though an equal fate they share,
Yet one alone deserves our care.
Her sex a page's dress belied;
The cloak and doublet, loosely tied,
Obscured her charms, but could not hide.
Her cap down o'er her face she drew;
And, on her doublet breast,
She tried to hide the badge of blue,
Lord Marmion's falcon-crest.
But, at the Prioress' command,
A Monk undid the silken band
That tied her tresses fair,
And raised the bonnet from her head,
And down her slender form they spread,
In ringlets rich and rare.

* That there was an ancient priory at Tynemouth is certain. Its ruins are situated on a high rocky point; and doubtless many a vow was made to the shrine, by the distressed mariners who drove towards the iron-bound coast of Northumberland in stormy weather. It was anciently a nunnery; for Virca, abbess of Tynemouth, presented St. Cuthbert (yet alive) with a rare winding-sheet, in emulation of a holy lady, called Tuda, who had sent him a coffin. But, as in the case of Whitby, and of Holy Island, the introduction of nuns at

Constance de Beverley they know,
Sister professed of Fontevraud,
Whom the church numbered with the dead,
For broken vows, and convent fled.

XXI.

When thus her face was given to view,
(Although so pallid was her hue,
It did a ghastly contrast bear,
To those bright ringlets glistering fair,)
Her look composed, and steady eye,
Bespoke a matchless constancy;
And there she stood so calm and pale,
That, but her breathing did not fail,
And motion slight of eye and head,
And of her bosom, warranted
That neither sense nor pulse she lacks,
You might have thought a form of wax,
Wrought to the life, was there;
So still she was, so pale, so fair.

XXII.

Her comrade was a sordid soul,
Such as does murder for a meed;
Who, but of fear, knows no control,
Because his conscience, seared and foul,
Feels not the import of his deed;
One, whose brute feeling ne'er aspires
Beyond his own more brute desires.
Such tools the tempter ever needs,
To do the savagest of deeds;
For them no visioned terrors daunt,
Their nights no fancied spectres haunt;
One fear with them, of all most base,
The fear of death,—alone finds place.
This wretch was clad in frock and cowl,
And shamed not loud to moan and howl,
His body on the floor to dash,
And crouch, like hound beneath the lash;
While his mute partner, standing near,
Waited her doom without a tear.

XXIII.

Yet well the luckless wretch might shriek,
Well might her paleness terror speak!
For there were seen, in that dark wall,
Two niches, narrow, deep, and tall.
Who enters at such grisly door,
Shall ne'er, I ween, find exit more.
In each a slender meal was laid,
Of roots, of water, and of bread:

Tynemouth, in the reign of Henry VIII., is an anachronism. The nunnery at Holy Island is altogether fictitious.

By each, in Benedictine dress,
Two haggard monks stood motionless;
Who, holding high a blazing torch,
Showed the grim entrance of the porch;
Reflecting back the smoky beam,
The dark-red walls and arches gleam.
Hewn stones and cement were displayed,
And building tools in order laid.

XXIV.

These executioners were chose
As men who were with mankind foes,
And, with despite and envy fired,
Into the cloister had retired;
Or who, in desperate doubt of grace,
Strove, by deep penance, to efface
Of some foul crime the stain;
For, as the vassals of her will,
Such men the church selected still,
As either joyed in doing ill,
Or thought more grace to gain,
If in her cause they wrestled down
Feelings their nature strove to own.
By strange device were they brought there,
They knew not how, and knew not where.

XXV.

And now that blind old Abbot rose,
To speak the Chapter's doom,
On those the wall was to enclose,
Alive, within the tomb;*
But stopped, because that woeful maid,
Gathering her powers, to speak essayed;
Twice she essayed, and twice in vain,
Her accents might no utterance gain;
Nought but imperfect murmurs slip
From her convulsed and quivering lip:
'Twixt each attempt all was so still,
You seemed to hear a distant rill—
'Twas ocean's swells and falls;
For though this vault of sin and fear
Was to the sounding surge so near,
A tempest there you scarce could hear,
So massive were the walls.

* It is well known that the religious who broke their vows of chastity were subjected to the same penalty as the Roman vestals in a similar case. A small niche, sufficient to enclose their bodies, was made in the massive wall of the convent; a slender pittance of food and water was deposited in it, and the awful words, VADE IN PACE, were the signal for immuring the criminal. It is not likely that, in latter times, this punishment was often resorted to; but, among the ruins of the abbey of Coldingham, were some years ago discovered the remains of a female skeleton, which, from the shape of the niche, and the position of the figure, seemed to be that of an immured nun.

XXVI.

At length, an effort sent apart
The blood that curdled to her heart,
And light came to her eye,
And colour dawned upon her cheek,
A hectic and a fluttered streak,
Like that left on the Cheviot peak
By Autumn's stormy sky;
And when her silence broke at length,
Still as she spoke she gathered strength
And armed herself to bear.
It was a fearful sight to see
Such high resolve and constancy,
In form so soft and fair.

XXVII.

"I speak not to implore your grace;
Well know I, for one minute's space
Successless might I sue:
Nor do I speak your prayers to gain;
For if a death of lingering pain,
To cleanse my sins, be penance vain,
Vain are your masses too.—
I listened to a traitor's tale,
I left the convent and the veil,
For three long years I bowed my pride,
A horse-boy in his train to ride;
And well my folly's meed he gave,
Who forfeited, to be his slave,
All here, and all beyond the grave.—
He saw young Clara's face more fair,
He knew her of broad lands the heir,
Forgot his vows, his faith forswore,
And Constance was beloved no more.—
'Tis an old tale, and often told;
But, did my fate and wish agree,
Ne'er had been read, in story old,
Of maiden true betrayed for gold,
That loved, or was avenged, like me!

XXVIII.

"The king approved his favourite's aim;
In vain a rival barred his claim,
Whose faith with Clare's was plight,
For he attaints that rival's fame
With treason's charge—and on they came,
In mortal lists to fight.
Their oaths are said,
Their prayers are prayed,
Their lances in the rest are laid,
They meet in mortal shock;
And hark! the throng, with thundering cry,

Shout, 'Marmion, Marmion, to the sky!
De Wilton to the block!'
Say ye, who preach heaven shall decide,
When in the lists two champions ride,
Say, was heaven's justice here?
When, loyal in his love and faith,
Wilton found overthrow or death,
Beneath a traitor's spear.
How false the charge, how true he fell,
This guilty packet best can tell."—
Then drew a packet from her breast,
Paused, gathered voice, and spoke the rest.

XXIX.

"Still was false Marmion's bridal stayed;
To Whitby's convent fled the maid,
The hated match to shun.
'Ho! shifts she thus?' King Henry cried,
'Sir Marmion, she shall be thy bride,
If she were sworn a nun.'
One way remained—the king's command
Sent Marimon to the Scottish land:
I lingered here, and rescue planned
For Clara and for me:
This caitiff Monk, for gold, did swear,
He would to Whitby's shrine repair,
And, by his drugs, my rival fair
A saint in heaven should be.
But ill the dastard kept his oath,
Whose cowardice hath undone us both.

XXX.

"And now my tongue the secret tells,
Not that remorse my bosom swells,
But to assure my soul, that none
Shall ever wed with Marmion.
Had fortune my last hope betrayed,
This packet, to the king conveyed,
Had given him to the headsman's stroke,
Although my heart that instant broke.—
Now, men of death, work forth your will,
For I can suffer, and be still;
And come he slow, or come he fast,
It is but Death who comes at last.

XXXI.

"Yet dread me, from my living tomb,
Ye vassal slaves of bloody Rome!
If Marmion's late remorse should wake,
Full soon such vengeance will he take,
That you shall wish the fiery Dane
Had rather been your guest again.

Behind, a darker hour ascends!
The altars quake, the crosier bends,
The ire of a despotic king
Rides forth upon destruction's wing;
Then shall these vaults, so strong and deep,
Burst open to the sea-winds' sweep;
Some traveller then shall find my bones,
Whitening amid disjointed stones,
And, ignorant of priests' cruelty,
Marvel such reliques here should be."—

XXXII.

Fixed was her look, and stern her air;
Back from her shoulders streamed her hair;
The locks, that wont her brow to shade,
Stared up erectly from her head;
Her figure seemed to rise more high;
Her voice, despair's wild energy
Had given a tone of prophecy.
Appalled the astonished conclave sate;
With stupid eyes, the men of fate
Gazed on the light inspirèd form,
And listened for the avenging storm;
The judges felt the victim's dread;
No hand was moved, no word was said,
Till thus the Abbot's doom was given,
Raising his sightless balls to heaven:—
"Sister, let thy sorrows cease;
Sinful brother, part in peace!"—
From that dire dungeon, place of doom,
Of execution too, and tomb,
Paced forth the judges three;
Sorrow it were, and shame, to tell
The butcher-work that there befell,
When they had glided from the cell
Of sin and misery.

XXXIII.

An hundred winding steps convey
That conclave to the upper day;
But, ere they breathed the fresher air,
They heard the shriekings of despair,
And many a stifled groan:
With speed their upward way they take,
(Such speed as age and fear can make,)
And crossed themselves for terror's sake,
As, hurrying, tottering on;
Even in the vesper's heavenly tone,
They seemed to hear a dying groan,
And bade the passing knell to toll
For welfare of a parting soul.
Slow o'er the midnight wave it swung,
Northumbrian rocks in answer rung;

To Warkworth cell the echoes rolled,
His beads the wakeful hermit told;
The Bamborough peasant raised his head,
But slept ere half a prayer he said;
So far was heard the mighty knell,
The stag sprung up on Cheviot Fell,
Spread his broad nostril to the wind,
Listed before, aside, behind;
Then couched him down beside the hind,
And quaked among the mountain fern,
To hear that sound so dull and stern.

INTRODUCTION TO CANTO THIRD.

TO WILLIAM ERSKINE, ESQ.*

Ashestiel, Ettricke Forest.

LIKE April morning clouds, that pass,
With varying shadow, o'er the grass,
And imitate, on field and furrow,
Life's chequered scene of joy and sorrow;
Like streamlet of the mountain north,
Now in a torrent racing forth,
Now winding slow its silver train,
And almost slumbering on the plain;
Like breezes of the Autumn day,
Whose voice inconstant dies away,
And ever swells again as fast,
When the ear deems its murmur past;
Thus various, my romantic theme
Flits, winds, or sinks, a morning dream.
Yet pleased, our eye pursues the trace
Of Light and Shade's inconstant race;
Pleased, views the rivulet afar,
Weaving its maze irregular;
And pleased, we listen as the breeze
Heaves its wild sigh through Autumn trees.
Then wild as cloud, or stream, or gale,
Flow on, flow unconfined my tale.

Need I to thee, dear Erskine, tell,
I love the licence all too well,
In sound now lowly, and now strong,
To raise the desultory song?

* A judge of the Court of Session. He was the poet's friend, and he died in 1822.

Oft, when, 'mid such capricious chime,
Some transient fit of loftier rhyme,
To thy kind judgment seemed excuse
For many an error of the muse;
Oft hast thou said, "If still mis-spent,
Thine hours to poetry are lent,
Go, and to tame thy wandering course,
Quaff from the fountain at the source;
Approach those masters, o'er whose tomb
Immortal laurels ever bloom;
Instructive of the feebler bard,
Still from the grave their voice is heard;
From them, and from the paths they showed,
Choose honoured guide and practised road;
Nor ramble on through brake and maze,
With harpers rude of barbarous days.

"Or, deem'st thou not our later time
Yields topic meet for classic rhyme?
Hast thou no elegiac verse
For Brunswick's venerable hearse?
What! not a line, a tear, a sigh,
When valour bleeds for liberty?
Oh, hero of that glorious time,
When, with unrivalled light sublime,—
Though martial Austria, and though all
The might of Russia, and the Gaul,
Though banded Europe stood her foes—
The star of Brandenburgh arose,
Thou couldst not live to see her beam
For ever quenched in Jena's stream.*
Lamented chief!—it was not given
To thee to change the doom of heaven,
And crush that dragon in its birth,
Predestined scourge of guilty earth.
Lamented chief!—not thine the power,
To save in that presumptuous hour,
When Prussia hurried to the field,
And snatched the spear, but left the shield:
Valour and skill 'twas thine to try,
And, tried in vain, 'twas thine to die.
Ill had it seemed thy silver hair
The last, the bitterest pang to share,
For princedoms reft, and scutcheons riven,
And birthrights to usurpers given;

* The duke of Brunswick was wounded in the face at the commencement of the disastrous battle of Jena, Oct. 14, 1806. He was compelled to quit the field, and was transported on a litter to Brunswick. The continued advance of the French induced him to seek another retreat, and he died of his wounds, Nov. 10, in the seventy-second year of his age.—See *Annual Register*.

Thy land's thy children's wrongs to feel,
And witness woes thou couldst not heal!
On thee relenting heaven bestows
For honoured life an honoured close;
And when revolves, in time's sure change,
The hour of Germany's revenge,
When, breathing fury for her sake,
Some new Arminius shall awake,
Her champion, ere he strike, shall come
To whet his sword on Brunswick's tomb.

"Or of the Red-Cross hero teach,*
Dauntless in dungeon as on breach:
Alike to him the sea, the shore,
The brand, the bridle, or the oar;
Alike to him the war that calls
Its votaries to the shattered walls,
Which the grim Turk besmeared with blood,
Against the Invincible made good;
Or that, whose thundering voice could wake
The silence of the polar lake,
When stubborn Russ, and metalled Swede,
On the warped wave their death-game played:
Or that, where vengeance and affright
Howled round the father of the fight,
Who snatched on Alexandria's sand
The conqueror's wreath with dying hand.†

"Or, if to touch such chord be thine,
Restore the ancient tragic line,
And emulate the notes that rung
From the wild harp which silent hung,
By silver Avon's holy shore,
Till twice an hundred years rolled o'er;
When she, the bold Enchantress,‡ came,
With fearless hand and heart on flame!
From the pale willow snatched the treasure,
And swept it with a kindred measure,
Till Avon's swans, while rung the grove
With Montfort's hate and Basil's love,
Awakening at the inspired strain,
Deemed their own Shakespeare lived again."

Thy friendship thus thy judgment wronging,
With praises not to me belonging,
In task more meet for mightiest powers,
Wouldst thou engage my thriftless hours.
But say, my Erskine, hast thou weighed
That secret power by all obeyed,

*Sir Sidney Smith. †Sir Ralph Abercrombie.
‡Joanna Baillie.

Which warps not less the passive mind,
Its source concealed or undefined;
Whether an impulse, that has birth
Soon as the infant wakes on earth,
One with our feelings and our powers,
And rather part of us than ours;
Or whether fitlier termed the sway
Of habit, formed in early day?
Howe'er derived, its force confessed
Rules with despotic sway the breast,
And drags us on by viewless chain,
While taste and reason plead in vain.
Look east, and ask the Belgian why,
Beneath Batavia's sultry sky,
He seeks not eager to inhale
The freshness of the mountain gale,
Content to rear his whitened wall
Beside the dank and dull canal?
He'll say, from youth he loved to see
The white sail gliding by the tree.
Or see yon weather-beaten hind,
Whose sluggish herds before him wind,
Whose tattered plaid and rugged cheek
His northern clime and kindred speak;
Through England's laughing meads he goes,
And England's wealth around him flows:
Ask, if it would content him well,
At ease in these gay plains to dwell,
Where hedge-rows spread a verdant screen,
And spires and forests intervene,
And the neat cottage peeps between?
No! not for these will he exchange
His dark Lochaber's boundless range,
Nor for fair Devon's meads forsake
Bennevis grey and Garry's lake.

Thus, while I ape the measure wild
Of tales that charmed me yet a child,
Rude though they be, still with the chime
Return the thoughts of earlier time;
And feelings, roused in life's first day,
Glow in the line, and prompt the lay.
Then rise those crags, that mountain tower
Which charmed my fancy's wakening hour:
Though no broad river swept along,
To claim, perchance, heroic song;
Though sighed no groves in summer gale,
To prompt of love a softer tale;
Though scarce a puny streamlet's speed
Claimed homage from a shepherd's reed,
Yet was poetic impulse given,
By the green hill and clear blue heaven.

It was a barren scene, and wild,
Where naked cliffs were rudely piled:
But ever and anon between
Lay velvet tufts of loveliest green;
And well the lonely infant knew
Recesses where the wall-flower grew,
And honey-suckle loved to crawl
Up the low crag and ruined wall.
I deemed such nooks the sweetest shade
The sun in all his round surveyed;
And still I thought that shattered tower
The mightiest work of human power;
And marvelled, as the aged hind
With some strange tale bewitched my mind,
Of forayers, who, with headlong force,
Down from that strength had spurred their horse,
Their southern rapine to renew,
Far in the distant Cheviots blue,
And, home returning, filled the hall
With revel, wassel-rout, and brawl.—
Methought that still with tramp and clang
The gate-way's broken arches rang;
Methought grim features, seamed with scars,
Glared through the windows' rusty bars.
And ever, by the winter hearth,
Old tales I heard of woe or mirth,
Of lovers' sleights, of ladies' charms,
Of witches' spells, of warriors' arms;
Of patriot battles, won of old
By Wallace wight and Bruce the bold;
Of later fields of feud and fight,
When, pouring from their Highland height,
The Scottish clans, in headlong sway,
Had swept the scarlet ranks away.
While stretched at length upon the floor,
Again I fought each combat o'er,
Pebbles and shells, in order laid,
The mimic ranks of war displayed;
And onward still the Scottish Lion bore,
And still the scattered Southron fled before.

Still, with vain fondness, could I trace,
Anew, each kind familiar face,
That brightened at our evening fire;
From the thatched mansion's grey-haired Sire,
Wise without learning, plain and good,
And sprung of Scotland's gentler blood;
Whose eye in age, quick, clear, and keen,
Showed what in youth its glance had been;
Whose doom discording neighbours sought,
Content with equity unbought;
To him the venerable Priest,

Our frequent and familiar guest,
Whose life and manners well could paint
Alike the student and the saint;
Alas! whose speech too oft I broke
With gambol rude and timeless joke:
For I was wayward, bold, and wild,
A self-willed imp, a grandame's child;
But half a plague, and half a jest,
Was still endured, beloved, caressed.

From me, thus nurtured, dost thou ask
The classic poet's well-conned task?
Nay, Erskine, nay—on the wild hill
Let the wild heathbell flourish still;
Cherish the tulip, prune the vine,
But freely let the woodbine twine,
And leave untrimmed the eglantine:
Nay, my friend, nay—since oft thy praise
Hath given fresh vigour to my lays,
Since oft thy judgment could refine
My flattened thought, or cumbrous line,
Still kind, as is thy wont, attend,
And in the minstrel spare the friend.
Though wild as cloud, as stream, as gale,
Flow forth, flow unrestrained, my tale!

CANTO THIRD.

THE HOSTEL, OR INN.

I.

The livelong day Lord Marmion rode:
The mountain path the Palmer showed;
By glen and streamlet winded still,
Where stunted birches hid the rill.
They might not choose the lowland road,
For the Merse forayers were abroad,
Who, fired with hate and thirst of prey,
Had scarcely failed to bar their way.
Oft on the trampling band, from crown
Of some tall cliff, the deer looked down;
On wing of jet, from his repose
In the deep heath, the black-cock rose;
Sprung from the gorse the timid roe,
Nor waited for the bending bow;
And when the stony path began,
By which the naked peak they wan,*
Up flew the snowy ptarmigan.†

* Gained. † White Game.—*Jamieson.*

The noon had long been passed before
They gained the height of Lammermoor;
Thence winding down the northern way,
Before them, at the close of day,
Old Gifford's* towers and hamlet lay.

II.

No summons calls them to the tower,
To spend the hospitable hour.
To Scotland's camp the Lord was gone;
His cautious dame, in bower alone,
Dreaded her castle to unclose,
So late, to unknown friends or foes.
On through the hamlet as they paced,
Before a porch, whose front was graced
With bush and flagon trimly placed,
Lord Marmion drew his rein:
The village inn† seemed large though rude,
Its cheerful fire and hearty food
Might well relieve his train.
Down from their seats the horsemen sprung,
With jingling spurs the court-yard rung;
They bind their horses to the stall,
For forage, food, and firing call,
And various clamour fills the hall,
Weighing the labour with the cost,
Toils everywhere the bustling host.

III.

Soon by the chimney's merry blaze,
Through the rude hostel might you gaze;
Might see, where, in dark nook aloof,
The rafters of the sooty roof
Bore wealth of winter cheer;
Of sea-fowl dried, and solands‡ store,
And gammons of the tusky boar,
And savoury haunch of deer.
The chimney arch projected wide;
Above, around it, and beside,
Were tools for housewives' hand:
Nor wanted, in that martial day,
The implements of Scottish fray,
The buckler, lance, and brand.

* The village of Gifford is situated about four miles from Haddington.

† The accommodations of a Scottish hostelrie, or inn, in the sixteenth century, may be collected from Dunbar's admirable tale of the "Friars of Berwick." Simon Lauder, "the gay ostleir," seems to have lived very comfortably; and his wife decorated her person with a scarlet kirtle, and a belt of silk and silver, and rings upon her fingers; and feasted her paramour with rabbits, capons, partridges, and Bourdeaux wine.

‡ Gannets.—*Jamieson.*

Beneath its shade, the place of state,
On oaken settle Marmion sate,
And viewed around the blazing hearth,
His followers mix in noisy mirth,
Whom with brown ale, in jolly tide,
From ancient vessels ranged aside,
Full actively their host supplied.

IV.

Theirs was the glee of martial breast,
And laughter theirs at little jest;
And oft Lord Marmion deigned to aid,
And mingle in the mirth they made:
For though, with men of high degree,
The proudest of the proud was he,
Yet, trained in camps, he knew the art
To win the soldier's hardy heart.
They love a captain to obey,
Boisterous as March, yet fresh as May;
With open hand, and brow as free,
Lover of wine, and minstrelsy;
Ever the first to scale a tower,
As venturous in a lady's bower;
Such buxom chief shall lead his host
From India's fires to Zembla's frost.

V.

Resting upon his pilgrim staff,
Right opposite the Palmer stood;
His thin dark visage seen but half,
Half hidden by his hood.
Still fixed on Marmion was his look,
Which he, who ill such gaze could brook,
Strove by a frown to quell;
But not for that, though more than once
Full met their stern encountering glance,
The Palmer's visage fell.

VI.

By fits less frequent from the crowd
Was heard the burst of laughter loud;
For still, as squire and archer stared
On that dark face and matted beard,
Their glee and game declined.
All gazed at length in silence drear,
Unbroke, save when in comrade's ear
Some yeoman, wondering in his fear,
Thus whispered forth his mind:—
"Saint Mary! saw'st thou e'er such sight?
How pale his cheek, his eye how bright,
Whene'er the fire-brand's fickle light

Glances beneath his cowl!
Full on our Lord he sets his eye;
For his best palfrey, would not I
Endure that sullen scowl."—

VII.

But Marmion, as to chase the awe
Which thus had quelled their hearts, who saw
The ever-varying fire-light show
That figure stern and face of woe,
Now called upon a squire:—
"Fitz-Eustace, know'st thou not some lay,
To speed the lingering night away?
We slumber by the fire."—

VIII.

"So please you," thus the youth rejoined,
"Our choicest minstrel 's left behind.
Ill may we hope to please your ear,
Accustomed Constant's strains to hear
The harp full deftly can he strike,
And wake the lover's lute alike;
To dear Saint Valentine, no thrush
Sings livelier from a spring-tide bush;
No nightingale her love-lorn tune
More sweetly warbles to the moon.
Woe to the cause, whate'er it be,
Detains from us his melody,
Lavished on rocks, and billows stern,
Or duller monks of Lindisfarne.
Now must I venture as I may,
To sing his favourite roundelay."

IX.

A deep voice Fitz-Eustace had,
The air he chose was wild and sad;
Such have I heard, in Scottish land,
Rise from the busy harvest band,
When falls before the mountaineer,
On lowland plains, the ripened ear.
Now one shrill voice the notes prolong,
Now a wild chorus swells the song:
Oft have I listened, and stood still,
As it came softened up the hill,
And deemed it the lament of men
Who languished for their native glen;
And thought, how sad would be such sound,
On Susquehana's swampy ground,
Kentucky's wood-encumbered brake,
Or wild Ontario's boundless lake,
Where heart-sick exiles, in the strain,
Recalled fair Scotland's hills again!

X.

SONG.

Where shall the lover rest,
Whom the fates sever
From his true maiden's breast,
Parted for ever?
Where, through groves deep and high,
Sounds the far billow,
Where early violets die,
Under the willow.

CHORUS.

Eleu loro, &c. Soft shall be his pillow.

There, through the summer day,
Cool streams are laving;
There, while the tempests sway,
Scarce are boughs waving;
There, thy rest shalt thou take,
Parted for ever,
Never again to wake,
Never, O never.

CHORUS.

Eleu loro, &c. Never, O never.

XI.

Where shall the traitor rest,
He, the deceiver,
Who could win maiden's breast,
Ruin, and leave her?
In the lost battle,
Borne down by the flying,
Where mingles war's rattle,
With groans of the dying.

CHORUS.

Eleu loro, &c. There shall he be lying.

Her wing shall the eagle flap
O'er the false-hearted;
His warm blood the wolf shall lap,
Ere life be parted.
Shame and dishonour sit
By his grave ever;
Blessing shall hallow it,—
Never, O never.

CHORUS.

Eleu loro, &c. Never, O never.

XII.

It ceased, the melancholy sound;
And silence sunk on all around.
The air was sad; but sadder still
It fell on Marmion's ear,
And plained as if disgrace and ill,
And shameful death were near.
He drew his mantle past his face,
Between it and the band,
And rested with his head a space,
Reclining on his hand.
His thoughts I scan not; but I ween,
That, could their import have been seen,
The meanest groom in all the hall,
That e'er tied courser to a stall,
Would scarce have wished to be their prey,
For Lutterward and Fontenaye.

XIII.

High minds, of native pride and force,
Most deeply feel thy pangs, Remorse!
Fear, for their scourge, mean villains have,
Thou art the torturer of the brave;
Yet fatal strength they boast to steel
Their minds to bear the wounds they feel;
Even while they writhe beneath the smart
Of civil conflict in the heart.
For soon Lord Marmion raised his head,
And, smiling, to Fitz-Eustace said:—
"Is it not strange, that, as ye sung,
Seemed in mine ear a death-peal rung,
Such as in nunneries they toll
For some departing sister's soul?
Say, what may this portend?"
Then first the Palmer silence broke,
(The livelong day he had not spoke,)
"The death of a dear friend."*

XIV.

Marmion, whose steady heart and eye
Ne'er changed in worst extremity;
Marmion, whose soul could scantly brook,
Even from his king, a haughty look;
Whose accent of command controlled,
In camps, the boldest of the bold—
Thought, look, and utterance, failed him now,
Fallen was his glance, and flushed his brow:

* Among other omens to which faithful credit is given among the Scottish peasantry, is what is called the "dead bell," explained by James Hogg, to be that tinkling in the ears which the country people regard as the secret intelligence of some friend's decease.

For either in the tone,
Or something in the Palmer's look,
So full upon his conscience strook,
That answer he found none.
Thus oft it haps, that when within
They shrink at sense of secret sin,
A feather daunts the brave;
A fool's wild speech confounds the wise,
And proudest princes veil their eyes
Before their meanest slave.

XV.

Well might he falter!—by his aid
Was Constance Beverley betrayed;
Not that he augured of the doom,
Which on the living closed the tomb,
But, tired to hear the desperate maid
Threaten by turns, beseech, upbraid;
And wroth, because, in wild despair,
She practised on the life of Clare;
Its fugitive the church he gave,
Though not a victim, but a slave;
And deemed restraint in convent strange,
Would hide her wrongs, and her revenge.
Himself, proud Henry's favourite peer,
Held Romish thunders, idle fear,
Secure his pardon he might hold,
For some slight mulct of penance-gold.
Thus judging, he gave secret way,
When the stern priests surprised their prey:
His train but deemed the favourite page
Was left behind, to spare his age;
Or other if they deemed, none dared
To mutter what he thought and heard:
Woe to the vassal, who durst pry
Into Lord Marmion's privacy!

XVI.

His conscience slept—he deemed her well,
And safe secured in distant cell:
But, wakened by her favourite lay,
And that strange Palmer's boding say,
That fell so ominous and drear,
Full on the object of his fear,
To aid remorse's venomed throes,
Dark tales of convent vengeance rose;
And Constance, late betrayed and scorned,
All lovely on his soul returned:
Lovely as when, at treacherous call,
She left her convent's peaceful wall,
Crimsoned with shame, with terror mute,
Dreading alike escape, pursuit,

Till love, victorious o'er alarms,
Hid fears and blushes in his arms.

XVII.

"Alas!" he thought, "how changed that mien!
How changed these timid looks have been,
Since years of guilt, and of disguise,
Have steeled her brow, and armed her eyes!
No more of virgin terror speaks
The blood that mantles in her cheeks;
Fierce, and unfeminine, are there,
Frenzy for joy, for grief despair;
And I the cause—for whom were given
Her peace on earth, her hopes in heaven!—
Would," thought he, as the picture grows,
"I on its stalk had left the rose!
Oh, why should man's success remove
The very charms that wake his love!
Her convent's peaceful solitude
Is now a prison harsh and rude;
And, pent within the narrow cell,
How will her spirit chafe and swell!
How brook the stern monastic laws!
The penance how—and I the cause!—
Vigil and scourge—perhaps even worse;"—
And twice he rose to cry "to horse!"
And twice his sovereign's mandate came,
Like damp upon a kindling flame;
And twice he thought, "Gave I not charge
She should be safe, though not at large?
They durst not, for their island, shred
One golden ringlet from her head."

XVIII.

While thus in Marmion's bosom strove
Repentance and reviving love,
Like whirlwinds, whose contending sway
I've seen Loch Vennachar obey,
Their Host the Palmer's speech had heard,
And, talkative, took up the word:—
"Ay, reverend Pilgrim, you, who stray
From Scotland's simple land away,
To visit realms afar,
Full often learn the art to know,
Of future weal, or future woe,
By word, or sign, or star;
Yet might a knight his fortune hear,
If, knight-like, he despises fear,
Not far from hence:—if fathers old
Aright our hamlet legend told."—
These broken words the menials move,
(For marvels still the vulgar love;)

And, Marmion giving licence cold,
His tale the Host thus gladly told.

XIX.

THE HOST'S TALE.

"A clerk could tell what years have flown
Since Alexander filled our throne,
Third monarch of that warlike name,
And eke the time when here he came
To seek Sir Hugo, then our lord:
A braver never drew a sword;
A wiser never, at the hour
Of midnight, spoke the word of power;
The same, whom ancient records call
The founder of the Goblin Hall.*
I would, Sir Knight, your longer stay
Gave you that cavern to survey.
Of lofty roof, and ample size,
Beneath the castle deep it lies:
To hew the living rock profound,
The floor to pave, the arch to round,
There never toiled a mortal arm,
It all was wrought by word and charm;
And I have heard my grandsire say,
That the wild clamour and affray
Of those dread artisans of hell,
Who laboured under Hugo's spell,
Sounded as loud as ocean's war,
Among the caverns of Dunbar.

XX.

"The king Lord Gifford's castle sought,
Deep-labouring with uncertain thought:
Even then he mustered all his host,
To meet upon the western coast;
For Norse and Danish galleys plied
Their oars within the firth of Clyde.
There floated Haco's† banner trim,
Above Norweyan warriors grim,
Savage of heart, and large of limb;
Threatening both continent and isle,
Bute, Arran, Cunninghame, and Kyle.

* A vaulted hall under the ancient castle of Gifford, or Yestar, for it bears either name indifferently, the construction of which has, from a very remote period, been ascribed to magic

† In 1263, Haco, king of Norway, came into the Firth of Clyde, with a powerful armament, and made a descent at Largs, in Ayrshire. Here he was encountered and defeated, on the 2nd October, by Alexander III. Haco retreated to Orkney, where he died soon after this disgrace to his arms. There are still existing, near the place of battle, many barrows, some of which, having been opened, were found, as usual, to contain bones and urns.

Lord Gifford, deep beneath the ground,
Heard Alexander's bugle sound,
And tarried not his garb to change,
But, in his wizard habit* strange,
Came forth, a quaint and fearful sight;
His mantle lined with fox-skins white:
His high and wrinkled forehead bore
A pointed cap, such as of yore
Clerks say that Pharaoh's Magi wore;
His shoes were marked with cross and spell:
Upon his breast a pentacle;†
His zone, of virgin parchment thin,
Or, as some tell, of dead man's skin,
Bore many a planetary sign,
Combust,‡ and retrograde, and trine;‡
And in his hand he held prepared,
A naked sword without a guard.

XXI.

"Dire dealings with the fiendish race
Had marked strange lines upon his face;
Vigil and fast had worn him grim,
His eyesight dazzled seemed, and dim,
As one unused to upper day;
Even his own menials with dismay
Beheld, Sir Knight, the grisly sire,
In this unwonted wild attire;
Unwonted, for traditions run,
He seldom thus beheld the sun.
'I know,' he said,—his voice was hoarse,
And broken seemed its hollow force,—
'I know the cause, although untold,
Why the king seeks his vassal's hold:
Vainly from me my liege would know
His kingdom's future weal or woe:
But yet, if strong his arm and heart,
His courage may do more than art.

* "Magicians, as is well known, were very curious in the choice and form of their vestments. Their caps are oval, or like pyramids, with lappets on each side, and fur within. Their gowns are long, and furred with fox-skins, under which they have a linen garment, reaching to the knee. Their girdles are three inches broad, and have many cabalistical names, with crosses, trines, and circles, inscribed on them. Their shoes should be of new russet leather, with a cross cut upon them. Their knives are dagger-fashion; and their swords have neither guard nor scabbard." See these, and many other particulars, in the Discourse concerning Devils and Spirits, annexed to REGINALD SCOTT'S *Discovery of Witchcraft*, edition 1665.

† "A pentacle is a piece of fine linen, folded with five corners, according to the five senses, and suitably inscribed with characters. This the magician extends towards the spirits which he evokes, when they are stubborn and rebellious, and refuse to be conformable unto the ceremonies and rites of magic."—See *Reginald Scott.*

‡ Astronomical terms.

XXII.

"'Of middle air the demons proud,
Who ride upon the racking cloud,
Can read, in fixed or wandering star,
The issue of events afar;
But still their sullen aid withhold,
Save when by mightier force controlled.
Such late I summoned to my hall;
And though so potent was the call,
That scarce the deepest nook of hell
I deemed a refuge from the spell,
Yet, obstinate in silence still,
The haughty demon mocks my skill.
But thou,—who little know'st thy might,
As born upon that blessèd night,
When yawning graves, and dying groan,
Proclaimed hell's empire overthrown,*—
With untaught valour shalt compel
Response denied to magic spell.'—
'Gramercy,' quoth our Monarch free,
'Place him but front to front with me,
And, by this good and honoured brand,
The gift of Cœur-de-Lion's hand,
Soothly I swear, that, tide what tide,
The demon shall a buffet bide.'—
His bearing bold the wizard viewed,
And thus, well pleased, his speech renewed:—
'There spoke the blood of Malcolm!—mark:
Forth pacing hence, at midnight dark,
The rampart seek, whose circling crown
Crests the ascent of yonder down;
A southern entrance shalt thou find;
There halt, and there thy bugle wind,
And trust thine elfin foe to see,
In guise of thy worst enemy;
Couch then thy lance, and spur thy steed—
Upon him! and St. George to speed!
If he go down, thou soon shalt know
Whate'er these airy sprites can show;—
If thy heart fail thee in the strife,
I am no warrant for thy life.'

XXIII.

"Soon as the midnight bell did ring,
Alone, and armed, forth rode the King
To that old camp's deserted round:
Sir Knight, you well might mark the mound,

* It is a popular article of faith, that those who are born on Christmas-day, or Good Friday, have the power of seeing spirits, and even of commanding them. The Spaniards imputed the haggard and downcast looks of their Philip II. to the disagreeable visions to which this privilege subjected him.

Left hand the town,—the Pictish race
The trench, long since, in blood did trace;
The moor around is brown and bare,
The space within is green and fair.
The spot our village children know,
For there the earliest wild flowers grow;
But woe betide the wandering wight,
That treads its circle in the night!
The breadth across, a bowshot clear,
Gives ample space for full career;
Opposed to the four points of heaven,
By four deep gaps is entrance given.
The southernmost our monarch passed,
Halted, and blew a gallant blast;
And on the north, within the ring,
Appeared the form of England's king,
Who then a thousand leagues afar,
In Palestine waged holy war:
Yet arms like England's did he wield,
Alike the leopards in the shield,
Alike his Syrian courser's frame,
The rider's length of limb the same:
Long afterwards did Scotland know,
Fell Edward* was her deadliest foe.

XXIV.

"The vision made our monarch start,
But soon he manned his noble heart,
And in the first career they ran,
The Elfin Knight fell horse and man;
Yet did a splinter of his lance
Through Alexander's visor glance,
And razed the skin—a puny wound.
The king, light leaping to the ground,
With naked blade his phantom foe
Compelled the future war to show.
Of Largs he saw the glorious plain,
Where still gigantic bones remain,
Memorial of the Danish war;
Himself he saw amid the field,
On high his brandished war-axe wield,
And strike proud Haco from his car,
While all around the shadowy kings,
Denmark's grim ravens cowered their wings.
'Tis said, that, in that awful night,
Remoter visions met his sight,
Foreshowing future conquests far,
When our sons' sons wage northern war;
A royal city, tower and spire,
Reddened the midnight sky with fire;

* Edward I., surnamed Longshanks.

And shouting crews her navy bore,
Triumphant, to the victor shore.*
Such signs may learned clerks explain,
They pass the wit of simple swain.

XXV.

"The joyful king turned home again,
Headed his host, and quelled the Dane;
But yearly, when returned the night
Of his strange combat with the sprite,
His wound must bleed and smart;
Lord Gifford then would gibing say,
'Bold as ye were, my liege, ye pay
The penance of your start.'
Long since, beneath Dunfermline's nave,
King Alexander fills his grave,
Our Lady give him rest!
Yet still the nightly spear and shield
The elfin warrior doth wield,
Upon the brown hill's breast;†
And many a knight hath proved his chance
In the charmed ring to break a lance,
But all have foully sped;
Save two, as legends tell, and they
Were Wallace wight, and Gilbert Hay.—
Gentles, my tale is said."

XXVI.

The quaighs‡ were deep, the liquor strong,
And on the tale the yeoman throng
Had made a comment sage and long,
But Marmion gave a sign;
And, with their lord, the squires retire;
The rest around the hostel fire,
Their drowsy limbs recline;
For pillow, underneath each head,
The quiver and the targe were laid:
Deep slumbering on the hostel floor,
Oppressed with toil and ale, they snore:
The dying flame, in fitful change,
Threw on the group its shadows strange.

XXVII.

Apart, and nestling in the hay
Of a waste loft, Fitz-Eustace lay;
Scarce, by the pale moonlight, were seen
The foldings of his mantle green:
Lightly he dreamt, as youth will dream,
Of sport by thicket, or by stream,

* This refers to Nelson's bombardment of Copenhagen in 1801.
† See "Border Minstrelsy," vol. ii., for the source whence many of these particulars are derived.
‡ A wooden cup composed of staves hooped together.

Of hawk or hound, of ring or glove,
Or, lighter yet, of lady's love.
A cautious tread his slumber broke,
And, close beside him, when he woke,
In moonbeam half, and half in gloom,
Stood a tall form with nodding plume;
But, ere his dagger Eustace drew
His master Marmion's voice he knew.

XXVIII.

—"Fitz-Eustace! rise,—I cannot rest,
Yon churl's wild legend haunts my breast,
And graver thoughts have chafed my mood;
The air must cool my feverish blood;
And fain would I ride forth, to see
The scene of elfin chivalry.
Arise, and saddle me my steed;
And, gentle Eustace, take good heed
Thou dost not rouse these drowsy slaves;
I would not, that the prating knaves
Had cause for saying, o'er their ale,
That I could credit such a tale."
Then softly down the steps they slid,
Eustace the stable door undid,
And, darkling, Marmion's steed arrayed,
While, whispering, thus the Baron said:

XXIX.

"Didst never, good my youth, hear tell,
That in the hour when I was born,
St. George, who graced my sire's chapelle,
Down from his steed of marble fell,
A weary wight* forlorn?
The flattering chaplains all agree,
The champion left his steed to me:
I would, the omen's truth to show,
That I could meet this Elfin Foe!
Blithe would I battle, for the right
To ask one question at the sprite:—
Vain thought! for elves, if elves there be,
An empty race, by fount or sea,
To dashing waters dance and sing,
Or round the green oak wheel their ring."—
Thus speaking, he his steed bestrode,
And from the hostel slowly rode.

XXX.

Fitz-Eustace followed him abroad,
And marked him pace the village road,

* First edition, "weight."

And listened to his horse's tramp,
Till, by the lessening sound,
He judged that of the Pictish camp
Lord Marmion sought the round.
Wonder it seemed, in the squire's eyes,
That one, so wary held, and wise,—
Of whom 'twas said, he scarce received
For gospel, what the church believed,—
Should, stirred by idle tale,
Ride forth in silence of the night,
As hoping half to meet a sprite,
Arrayed in plate and mail.
For little did Fitz-Eustace know,
That passions, in contending flow,
Unfix the strongest mind;
Wearied from doubt to doubt to flee
We welcome fond credulity,
Guide confident, though blind.

XXXI.

Little for this Fitz-Eustace cared,
But, patient, waited till he heard,
At distance, pricked to utmost speed,
The foot-tramp of a flying steed,
Come town-ward rushing on:
First, dead, as if on turf it trod,
Then, clattering on the village road,—
In other pace than forth he yode.*
Returned Lord Marmion.
Down hastily he sprung from selle,
And, in his haste, well nigh he fell;
To the squire's hand the rein he threw,
And spoke no word as he withdrew;
But yet the moonlight did betray,
The falcon-crest was soiled with clay;
And plainly might Fitz-Eustace see,
By stains upon the charger's knee,
And his left side, that on the moor
He had not kept his footing sure.
Long musing on these wondrous signs;
At length to rest the squire reclines,
Broken and short; for still, between,
Would dreams of terror intervene:
Eustace did ne'er so blithely mark
The first notes of the morning lark.

* Used by the old poets for "went."

INTRODUCTION TO CANTO FOURTH.

TO JAMES SKENE, ESQ.*

Ashestiel, Ettricke Forest.

An ancient Minstrel sagely said,
"Where is the life which late we led?"
That motley clown, in Arden wood,
Whom humorous Jacques with envy viewed,
Not even that clown could amplify,
On this trite text, so long as I.
Eleven years we now may tell,
Since we have known each other well;
Since, riding side by side, our hand
First drew the voluntary brand;
And sure, through many a varied scene,
Unkindness never came between.
Away these wingèd years have flown,
To join the mass of ages gone;
And though deep marked, like all below,
With chequered shades of joy and woe;
Though thou o'er realms and seas hast ranged,
Marked cities lost, and empires changed,
While here, at home, my narrower ken
Somewhat of manners saw, and men:
Though varying wishes, hopes, and fears,
Fevered the progress of these years,
Yet now, days, weeks, and months, but seem
The recollection of a dream,
So still we glide down to the sea
Of fathomless eternity.

Even now, it scarcely seems a day,
Since first I tuned this idle lay;
A task so often thrown aside,
When leisure graver cares denied,
That now, November's dreary gale,
Whose voice inspired my opening tale,
That same November gale once more
Whirls the dry leaves on Yarrow shore;
Their vexed boughs streaming to the sky,
Once more our naked birches sigh;
And Blackhouse heights, and Ettricke Pen,
Have donned their wintry shrouds again;
And mountain dark, and flooded mead,
Bid us forsake the banks of Tweed.
Earlier than wont along the sky,
Mixed with the rack, the snow-mists fly:

* The poet's friend and associate. He lived at Rubislaw, Aberdeenshire, and served in the same volunteer corps as Sir Walter.

The shepherd, who, in summer sun,
Has something of our envy won,
As thou with pencil, I with pen,
The features traced of hill and glen;
He who, outstretched, the livelong day,
At ease among the heath-flowers lay,
Viewed the light clouds with vacant look,
Or slumbered o'er his tattered book,
Or idly busied him to guide
His angle o'er the lessened tide;—
At midnight now, the snowy plain
Finds sterner labour for the swain.

When red hath set the beamless sun,
Through heavy vapours dank and dun;
When the tired ploughman, dry and warm,
Hears, half asleep, the rising storm
Hurling the hail, and sleeted rain,
Against the casement's tinkling pane;
The sounds that drive wild deer, and fox,
To shelter in the brake and rocks,
Are warnings which the shepherd ask
To dismal and to dangerous task.
Oft he looks forth, and hopes, in vain,
The blast may sink in mellowing rain;
Till, dark above, and white below,
Decided drives the flaky snow,
And forth the hardy swain must go.
Long, with dejected look and whine,
To leave the hearth his dogs, repine;
Whistling, and cheering them to aid,
Around his back he wreathes the plaid:
His flock he gathers, and he guides
To open downs, and mountain sides,
Where, fiercest though the tempest blow,
Least deeply lies the drift below.
The blast, that whistles o'er the fells,
Stiffens his locks to icicles;
Oft he looks back, while, streaming far,
His cottage window seems a star,—
Loses its feeble gleam,—and then
Turns patient to the blast again,
And, facing to the tempest's sweep,
Drives through the gloom his lagging sheep:
If fails his heart, if his limbs fail,
Benumbing death is in the gale;
His paths, his landmarks—all unknown,
Close to the hut, no more his own,
Close to the aid he sought in vain,
The morn may find the stiffen'd swain:*

* I cannot help here mentioning that, on the night in which these lines were written, suggested, as they were, by a sudden fall of snow,

His widow sees, at dawning pale,
His orphans raise their feeble wail;
And close beside him, in the snow,
Poor Yarrow, partner of their woe,
Couches upon his master's breast,
And licks his cheek, to break his rest.

Who envies now the shepherd's lot,
His healthy fare, his rural cot,
His summer couch by greenwood tree,
His rustic kirn's* loud revelry,
His native hill notes, tuned on high,
To Marion of the blithesome eye;
His crook, his scrip, his oaten reed,
And all Arcadia's golden creed?

Changes not so with us, my Skene,
Of human life the varying scene?
Our youthful summer oft we see
Dance by on wings of game and glee,
While the dark storm reserves its rage,
Against the winter of our age:
As he, the ancient chief of Troy,
His manhood spent in peace and joy;
But Grecian fires, and loud alarms,
Called ancient Priam forth to arms.
Then happy those,—since each must drain
His share of pleasure, share of pain,—
Then happy those, beloved of heaven,
To whom the mingled cup is given;
Whose lenient sorrows find relief,
Whose joys are chastened by their grief.
And such a lot, my Skene, was thine,
When thou of late wert doomed to twine,—
Just when thy bridal hour was by,—
The cypress with the myrtle tie;
Just on thy bride thy Sire had smiled,
And blessed the union of his child,
When love must change its joyous cheer,
And wipe affection's filial tear.
Nor did the actions next his end,
Speak more the father than the friend:
Scarce had lamented Forbes† paid
The tribute to his Minstrel's shade;

beginning after sunset, an unfortunate man perished exactly in the manner here described, and his body was next morning found close to his own house. The accident happened within five miles of the farm of Ashestiel.

* The Scottish harvest-home.

† Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo, Baronet; unequalled, perhaps, in the degree of individual affection entertained for him by his friends, as well as in the general respect and esteem of Scotland at large. His "Life of Beattie," whom he befriended and patronized in life,

The tale of friendship scarce was told,
Ere the narrator's heart was cold.
Far may we search before we find
A heart so manly and so kind.
But not around his honoured urn,
Shall friends alone, and kindred mourn;
The thousand eyes his care had dried,
Pour at his name a bitter tide;
And frequent falls the grateful dew,
For benefits the world ne'er knew.
If mortal charity dare lay claim
The Almighty's attributed name,
Inscribe above his mouldering clay,
"The widow's shield, the orphan's stay."
Nor, though it wake thy sorrow, deem
My verse intrudes on this sad theme;
For sacred was the pen that wrote,—
"Thy father's friend forget thou not:"
And grateful title may I plead.
For many a kindly word and deed,
To bring my tribute to his grave:—
'Tis little—but 'tis all I have.

To thee, perchance, this rambling strain
Recalls our summer walks again;
When doing nought,—and, to speak true,
Not anxious to find aught to do,—
The wild unbounded hills we ranged;
While oft our talk its topic changed,
And desultory, as our way,
Ranged unconfined from grave to gay.
Even when it flagged, as oft will chance,
No effort made to break its trance,
We could right pleasantly pursue
Our sports in social silence too.
Thou gravely labouring to portray
The blighted oak's fantastic spray;
I spelling o'er, with much delight,
The legend of that antique knight,
Tirante by name, ycleped the White.
At either's feet a trusty squire,
Pandour and Camp,* with eyes of fire,
Jealous, each other's motions viewed,
And scarce suppressed their ancient feud.
The laverock† whistled from the cloud;
The stream was lively, but not loud;

as well as celebrated after his decease, was not long published before the benevolent and affectionate biographer was called to follow the subject of his narrative. This melancholy event very shortly succeeded the marriage of the friend to whom this Introduction is addressed, with one of Sir William's daughters.

* Favourite dogs. † Lark.

From the white-thorn the May-flower shed
Its dewy fragrance round our head;
Not Ariel lived more merrily
Under the blossomed bough than we.

And blithesome nights, too, have been ours,
When winter stripped the summer's bowers;
Careless we heard, what now I hear,
The wild blast sighing deep and drear,
When fires were bright, and lamps beamed gay,
And ladies tuned the lovely lay;
And he was held a laggard soul,
Who shunned to quaff the sparkling bowl.
Then he, whose absence we deplore,*
Who breathes the gales of Devon's shore,
The longer missed, bewailed the more;
And thou, and I, and dear-loved R——,†
And one whose name I may not say‡—
For not Mimosa's tender tree
Shrinks sooner from the touch than he—
In merry chorus, well combined,
With laughter drowned the whistling wind.
Mirth was within; and Care without
Might gnaw her nails to hear our shout.
Not but amid the buxom scene,
Some grave discourse might intervene—
Of the good horse that bore him best,
His shoulder, hoof, and arching crest:
For, like mad Tom's,§ our chiefest care,
Was horse to ride, and weapon wear.
Such nights we've had, and, though the game
Of manhood be more sober tame,
And though the field-day, or the drill,
Seem less important now—yet still
Such may we hope to share again.
The sprightly thought inspires my strain;
And mark, how like a horseman true,
Lord Marmion's march I thus renew.

CANTO FOURTH.

THE CAMP.

I.

Eustace, I said, did blithely mark
The first notes of the merry lark.
The lark sung shrill, the cock he crew,
And loudly Marmion's bugles‖ blew,

* Colin Mackenzie of Potmore. He died in 1830.
† Sir William Rae. ‡ John Hay Forbes.
§ See "King Lear." ‖ First edition, "clarions."

And, with their light and lively call,
Brought groom and yeoman to the stall.
Whistling they came, and free of heart;
But soon their mood was changed:
Complaint was heard on every part,
Of something disarranged.
Some clamoured loud for armour lost;
Some brawled and wrangled with the host;
"By Becket's bones," cried one, "I fear*
That some false Scot has stolen my spear!"
Young Blount, Lord Marmion's second squire,
Found his steed wet with sweat and mire;
Although the rated horse-boy sware,
Last night he dressed him sleek and fair.
While chafed the impatient squire like thunder,
Old Hubert shouts, in fear and wonder,—
"Help, gentle Blount! help, comrades all!
Bevis lies dying in his stall:
To Marmion who the plight dare tell,
Of the good steed he loves so well?"
Gaping for fear and ruth, they saw
The charger panting on his straw;
Till one, who would seem wisest, cried,
"What else but evil could betide,
With that cursed Palmer for our guide?
Better we had through mire and bush
Been lanthorn-led by Friar Rush."†

II.

Fitz-Eustace, who the cause but guessed,
Nor wholly understood,
His comrades' clamorous plaints suppressed;
He knew Lord Marmion's mood.
Him, ere he issued forth, he sought,
And found deep-plunged in gloomy thought,
And did his tale display
Simply, as if he knew of nought
To cause such disarray.

*First edition, "swear."

†This personage is a strolling demon, or *esprit follet*, who, once upon a time, got admittance into a monastery as a scullion, and played the monks many pranks. He was also a sort of Robin Goodfellow, and Jack o'Lanthorn. It is in allusion to this mischievous demon that Milton's clown speaks,—

She was pinched, and pulled, she said,
And he by *friar's lanthorn* led.

"The History of Friar Rush" is of extreme rarity, and, for some time, even the existence of such a book was doubted, although it is expressly alluded to by Reginald Scott, in his "Discovery of Witchcraft." I have perused a copy in the valuable library of my friend Mr. Heber; and I observe, from Mr. Beloe's "Anecdotes of Literature," that there is one in the excellent collection of the marquis of Stafford.

Lord Marmion gave attention cold,
Nor marvelled at the wonders told,—
Passed them as accidents of course,
And bade his clarions sound to horse.

III.

Young Henry Blount, meanwhile, the cost
Had reckoned with their Scottish host;
And, as the charge he cast and paid,
"Ill thou deserv'st thy hire," he said:
"Dost see, thou knave, my horse's plight?
Fairies have ridden him all the night,
And left him in a foam!
I trust, that soon a conjuring band,
With English cross and blazing brand,
Shall drive the devils from this land,
To their infernal home;
For in this haunted den, I trow,
All night they trampled to and fro."
The laughing host looked on the hire,—
"Gramercy, gentle southern squire,
And if thou com'st among the rest,
With Scottish broad-sword to be blessed,
Sharp be the brand, and sure the blow,
And short the pang to undergo."—
Here stayed their talk—for Marmion
Gave now the signal to set on.
The Palmer showing forth the way,
They journeyed all the morning day.

IV.

The green-sward way was smooth and good,
Through Humbie's and through Saltoun's wood;
A forest glade, which, varying still,
Here gave a view of dale and hill;
There narrower closed, till over head
A vaulted screen the branches made.
"A pleasant path," Fitz-Eustace said;
"Such as where errant knights might see
Adventures of high chivalry;
Might meet some damsel flying fast,
With hair unbound, and looks aghast;
And smooth and level course were here,
In her defence to break a spear.
Here, too, are twilight nooks and dells;
And oft, in such, the story tells,
The damsel kind, from danger freed,
Did grateful pay her champion's meed."—
He spoke to cheer Lord Marmion's mind;
Perchance to show his lore designed;
For Eustace much had pored
Upon a huge romantic tome,
In the hall window of his home,

Imprinted at the antique dome
Of Caxton* or De Worde.†
Therefore he spoke—but spoke in vain,
For Marmion answered nought again.

V.

Now sudden distant trumpets shrill,
In notes prolonged by wood and hill,
Were heard to echo far;
Each ready archer grasped his bow,
But by the flourish soon they know,
They breathed no point of war.
Yet cautious, as in foeman's land,
Lord Marmion's order speeds the band,
Some opener ground to gain;
And scarce a furlong had they rode,
When thinner trees, receding, showed
A little woodland plain.
Just in that advantageous glade,
The halting troop a line had made,
As forth from the opposing shade
Issued a gallant train.

VI.

First came the trumpets, at whose clang
So late the forest echoes rang;
On prancing steeds they forward pressed,
With scarlet mantle, azure vest;
Each at his trump a banner wore,
Which Scotland's royal scutcheon bore;
Heralds and pursuivants, by name
Bute, Islay, Marchmount, Rothsay, came,
In painted tabards,‡ proudly showing
Gules, Argent, Or, and Azure glowing,
Attendant on a King-at-arms,
Whose hand the armorial truncheon held,
That feudal strife had often quelled,
When wildest its alarms.

VII.

He was a man of middle age;
In aspect manly, grave, and sage,
As on king's errand come;
But in the glances of his eye,
A penetrating, keen, and sly
Expression found its home;
The flash of that satiric rage,
Which, bursting on the early stage,
Branded the vices of the age,
And broke the keys of Rome.

* William Caxton, the first English printer, born 1412, died 1493.
† Caxton's successor. ‡ Short coats or mantles.

On milk-white palfrey forth he paced;
His cap of maintenance* was graced
With the proud heron-plume.
From his steed's shoulder, loin, and breast,
Silk housings swept the ground,
With Scotland's arms, device, and crest,
Embroidered round and round.
The double tressure† might you see,
First by Achaius borne,
The thistle, and the fleur-de-lis,
And gallant unicorn.
So bright the king's armorial coat,
That scarce the dazzled eye could note,
In living colours, blazoned brave,
The Lion, which his title gave.
A train, which well beseemed his state,
But all unarmed, around him wait.
Still is thy name in high account,
And still thy verse has charms,
Sir David Lindesay of the Mount,‡
Lord Lion King-at-arms!

VIII.

Down from his horse did Marmion spring,
Soon as he saw the Lion-King;
For well the stately Baron knew,
To him such courtesy was due,
Whom royal James himself had crowned,
And on his temples placed the round
Of Scotland's ancient diadem;
And wet his brow with hallowed wine,
And on his finger given§ to shine
The emblematic gem.
Their mutual greetings duly made,
The Lion thus his message said:—

* Or cap of dignity, a cap of state, made of crimson velvet, lined and turned up with ermine. It is carried before the king of Great Britain at his coronation and other great solemnities.—*Crabb.*

† A term in heraldry.

‡ The late elaborate edition of Sir David Lindesay's Works, by Mr. George Chalmers, has probably introduced him to many of my readers. I am uncertain if I abuse poetical license by introducing Sir David Lindesay in the character of Lion-Herald, sixteen years before he obtained that office. At any rate, I am not the first who has been guilty of the anachronism; for the author of "Flodden Field" dispatches *Dallamount*, which can mean nobody but Sir David de la Mont, to France, on the message of defiance from James IV. to Henry VIII. It was often an office imposed on the Lion King-at-arms, to receive foreign ambassadors; and Lindesay himself did this honour to Sir Ralph Sadler in 1539-40. Indeed, the oath of the Lion, in its first article, bears reference to his frequent employment upon royal messages and embassies.

§ First edition, "gave."

"Though Scotland's King hath deeply swore,
Ne'er to knit faith with Henry more;
And strictly hath forbid resort
From England to his royal court;
Yet, for he knows Lord Marmion's name,
And honours much his warlike fame,
My liege hath deemed it shame, and lack
Of courtesy, to turn him back;
And by his order, I, your guide,
Must lodging fit and fair provide,
Till finds King James meet time to see
The flower of English chivalry."

IX.

Though inly chafed at this delay,
Lord Marmion bears it as he may.
The Palmer, his mysterious guide,
Beholding thus his place supplied,
Sought to take leave in vain!
Strict was the Lion-King's command,
That none who rode in Marmion's band
Should sever from the train:
"England has here enow of spies
In Lady Heron's witching eyes;"
To Marchmount thus, apart, he said,
But fair pretext to Marmion made.
The right-hand path they now decline,
And trace against the stream the Tyne.

X.

At length up that wild dale they wind,
Where Crichtoun Castle* crowns the bank;
For there the Lion's care assigned
A lodging meet for Marmion's rank.
That castle rises on the steep
Of the green vale of Tyne;
And far beneath, where slow they creep
From pool to eddy, dark and deep,
Where alders moist, and willows weep,
You hear her streams repine.
The towers in different ages rose;
Their various architecture shows
The builders' various hands;
A mighty mass, that could oppose,
When deadliest hatred fired its foes,
The vengeful Douglas bands.

* A large ruinous castle on the banks of the Tyne, about nine miles from Edinburgh. As indicated in the text, it was built at different times, and with a very differing regard to splendour and accommodation. The oldest part of the building is a narrow keep, or tower, such as formed the mansion of a lesser Scottish baron; but so many additions have been made to it, that there is now a large court-yard, surrounded by buildings of different ages.

XI.

Crichtoun! though now thy miry court
But pens the lazy steer and sheep,
Thy turrets rude, and tottered Keep,
Have been the minstrel's loved resort.
Oft have I traced within thy fort,
Of mouldering shields the mystic sense,
Scutcheons of honour, or pretence,
Quartered in old armonial sort,
Remains of rude magnificence:
Nor wholly yet hath time defaced
The lordly gallery fair;
Nor yet the stony cord unbraced,
Whose twisted knots, with roses laced,
Adorn thy ruined stair.
Still rises unimpaired, below,
The court-yard's graceful portico;
Above its cornice, row and row
Of fair hewn facets richly show
Their pointed diamond form,
Though there but houseless cattle go
To shield them from the storm.
And, shuddering, still may we explore,
Where oft whilome were captives pent,
The darkness of thy Massy More;*
Or, from thy grass-grown battlement,
May trace, in undulating line,
The sluggish mazes of the Tyne.

XII.

Another aspect Crichtoun showed,
As through its portals Marmion rode;
But yet 'twas melancholy state
Received him at the outer gate;
For none were in the castle then,
But women, boys, or aged men.
With eyes scarce dried, the sorrowing dame,
To welcome noble Marmion came;
Her son, a stripling twelve years old,
Proffered the Baron's rein to hold:
For each man, that could draw a sword,
Had marched that morning with their lord,
Earl Adam Hepburn†—he who died
On Flodden, by his sovereign's side.
Long may his lady look in vain!
She ne'er shall see his gallant train
Come sweeping back through Crichtoun-Dean.
'Twas a brave race, before the name
Of hated Bothwell stained their fame.

* The pit, or prison vault.
† He was the second Earl of Bothwell, and fell in the field of Flod-

XIII.

And here two days did Marmion rest,
With every rite that honour claims,
Attended as the King's own guest,—
Such the command of royal James;
Who marshalled then his land's array,
Upon the Borough moor that lay.
Perchance he would not foeman's eye
Upon his gathering host should pry,
Till full prepared was every band
To march against the English land.
Here while they dwelt, did Lindesay's wit
Oft cheer the Baron's moodier fit;
And, in his turn, he knew to prize
Lord Marmion's powerful mind, and wise—
Trained in the lore of Rome and Greece,
And policies of war and peace.

XIV.

It chanced, as fell the second night,
That on the battlements they walked,
And, by the slowly fading light,
Of varying topics talked;
And, unaware, the Herald-bard
Said Marmion might his toil have spared,
In travelling so far;
For that a messenger from heaven
In vain to James had counsel given
Against the English war:*
And, closer questioned, thus he told
A tale, which chronicles of old
In Scottish story have enrolled:—

XV.

SIR DAVID LINDESAY'S TALE.

"Of all the palaces so fair,
Built for the royal dwelling,
In Scotland, far beyond compare
Linlithgow is excelling;

den, where, according to an ancient English poet, he distinguished himself by a furious attempt to retrieve the day:—

"Then on the Scottish part, right proud,
The Earl of Bothwell then out brast,
And stepping forth with stomach good,
Into the enemies' throng he thrast;
And *Bothwell! Bothwell!* cried bold,
To cause his souldiers to ensue,
But there he caught a wellcome cold,
The Englishmen straight down him threw.
Flodden Field.

Adam was grandfather to James, earl of Bothwell, too well known in the history of Queen Mary.

* The story may be found in Pitscottie and Buchanan.

And in its park, in jovial June,
How sweet the merry linnet's tune,
How blithe the blackbird's lay!
The wild buck bells* from ferny brake,
The coot dives merry on the lake,
The saddest heart might pleasure take
To see all nature gay.
But June is to our Sovereign dear
The heaviest month in all the year:
Too well his cause of grief you know,—
June saw his father's overthrow.†
Woe to the traitors, who could bring
The princely boy against his King!
Still in his conscience burns the sting.
In offices as strict as Lent,
King James's June is ever spent.

XVI.

"When last this ruthful month was come,
And in Linlithgow's holy dome
The King, as wont, was praying;
While for his royal father's soul
The chanters sung, the bells did toll,
The Bishop mass was saying—
For now the year brought round again
The day the luckless king was slain—
In Katharine's aisle the monarch knelt,
With sackcloth shirt, and iron belt,
And eyes with sorrow streaming;
Around him, in their stalls of state,
The Thistle's Knight-Companions sate,
Their banners o'er them beaming.
I too was there, and sooth to tell,
Bedeafened with the jangling knell,
Was watching where the sunbeams fell,
Through the stained casement gleaming;
But, while I marked what next befell
It seemed as I were dreaming.

* I am glad of an opportunity to describe the cry of the deer by another word than *braying*, although the latter has been sanctified by the use of the Scottish metrical translation of the Psalms. *Bell* seems to be an abbreviation of bellow. This sylvan sound conveyed great delight to our ancestors, chiefly, I suppose, from association. A gentle knight in the reign of Henry VIII., Sir Thomas Wortley, built Wantley Lodge, in Wancliffe Forest, for the pleasure (as an ancient inscription testifies) of "listening to the hart's *bell*."

† The rebellion against James III. was signalized by the cruel circumstance of his son's presence in the hostile army. When the king saw his own banner displayed against him, and his son in the faction of his enemies, he lost the little courage he ever possessed, fled out of the field, fell from his horse as it started at a woman and water-pitcher, and was slain, it is not well understood by whom. James IV., after the battle, passed to Stirling, and hearing the monks of the chapel royal deploring the death of his father, their

Stepped from the crowd a ghostly wight,
In azure gown, with cincture white;
His forehead bald, his head was bare,
Down hung at length his yellow hair.—
Now mock me not, when. good my lord,
I pledge to you my knightly word,
That, when I saw his placid grace,
His simple majesty of face,
His solemn bearing, and his pace
So stately gliding on;
Seemed to me ne'er did limner paint
So just an image of the Saint,
Who propped the Virgin in her faint,—
The loved Apostle John.

XVII.

"He stepped before the Monarch's chair,
And stood with rustic plainness there,
And little reverence made;
Nor head, nor body, bowed nor bent,
But on the desk his arm he leant,
And words like these he said,
In a low voice,--but never tone
So thrilled through vein, and nerve, and bone:—
'My mother sent me from afar,
Sir King, to warn thee not to war,—
Woe waits on thine array;
If war thou wilt, of woman fair,
Her witching wiles and wanton snare,
James Stuart, doubly warned, beware:
God keep thee as he may!'—
The wondering Monarch seemed to seek
For answer, and found none;
And when he raised his head to speak,
The monitor was gone.
The Marshal and myself had cast
To stop him as he outward passed:
But lighter than the whirlwind's blast,
He vanished from our eyes,
Like sunbeam on the billow cast,
That glances but, and dies."

XVIII.

While Lindesay told this marvel strange,
The twilight was so pale,
He marked not Marmion's colour change,
While listening to the tale;
But, after a suspended pause,
The Baron spoke:—"Of Nature's laws

founder, he was seized with deep remorse, which manifested itself in severe penances. The battle of Sauchie-burn, in which James III. fell, was fought June 18, 1488.

So strong I hold the force,
That never superhuman cause
Could e'er control their course:
And, three days since, had judged your aim
Was but to make your guest your game.
But I have seen, since past the Tweed,
What much has changed my sceptic creed,
And made me credit aught."—He stayed,
And seemed to wish his words unsaid;
But, by that strong emotion pressed,
Which prompts us to unload our breast,
Even when discovery's pain,
To Lindesay did at length unfold
The tale his village host had told,
At Gifford, to his train.
Nought of the Palmer says he there,
And nought of Constance, or of Clare:
The thoughts, which broke his sleep, he seems
To mention but as feverish dreams.

XIX.

"In vain," said he, "to rest I spread
My burning limbs, and couched my head,
Fantastic thoughts returned;
And, by their wild dominion led,
My heart within me burned.
So sore was the delirious goad,
I took my steed, and forth I rode,
And, as the moon shone bright and cold,
Soon reached the camp upon the wold.
The southern entrance I passed through,
And halted, and my bugle blew.
Methought an answer met my ear,—
Yet was the blast so low and drear,
So hollow, and so faintly blown,
It might be echo of my own.

XX.

"Thus judging, for a little space
I listened, ere I left the place;
But scarce could trust my eyes,
Nor yet can think they served me true,
When sudden in the ring I view,
In form distinct of shape and hue,
A mounted champion rise.—
I've fought, Lord-Lion, many a day,
In single fight, and mixed affray,
And ever, I myself may say,
Have borne me as a knight;
But when this unexpected foe
Seemed starting from the gulf below,—
I care not though the truth I show,—

I trembled with affright;
And as I placed in rest my spear,
My hand so shook for very fear,
I scarce could couch it right.

XXI.

"Why need my tongue the issue tell?
We ran our course,—my charger fell;—
What could he 'gainst the shock of hell?
I rolled upon the plain.
High o'er my head, with threatening hand,
The spectre shook his naked brand,—
Yet did the worst remain;
My dazzled eyes I upward cast,—
Not opening hell itself could blast
Their sight, like what I saw!
Full on his face the moonbeam strook,*—
A face could never be mistook!
I knew the stern vindictive look,
And held my breath for awe.
I saw the face of one who, fled
To foreign climes, has long been dead.—
I well believe the last;
For ne'er, from visor raised, did stare
A human warrior, with a glare
So grimly and so ghast.
Thrice o'er my head he shook the blade;
But when to good Saint George I prayed,
(The first time e'er I asked his aid,)
He plunged it in the sheath;
And, on his courser mounting light,
He seemed to vanish from my sight:
The moonbeam drooped, and deepest night
Sunk down upon the heath.—
'Twere long to tell what cause I have
To know his face, that met me there,
Called by his hatred from the grave,
To cumber upper air:
Dead or alive, good cause had he
To be my mortal enemy."—

XXII.

Marvelled Sir David of the Mount;
Then, learned in story, 'gan recount
Such chance had happed of old,
When once, near Norham, there did fight
A spectre fell, of fiendish might,
In likeness of a Scottish knight,
With Brian Bulmer bold,
And trained him nigh to disallow
The aid of his baptismal vow.

* Struck.

"And such a phantom, too, 'tis said,
With Highland broad-sword, targe, and plaid,
And fingers red with gore,
Is seen in Rothiemurcus glade,
Or where the sable pine-trees shade
Dark Tomantoul, and Achnaslaid,
Dromouchty, or Glenmore.*
And yet, whate'er such legends say,
Of warlike demon, ghost, or fay,
On mountain, moor, or plain,
Spotless in faith, in bosom bold,
True son of chivalry should hold
These midnight terrors vain:
For seldom have such spirits power
To harm, save in the evil hour,
When guilt we meditate within,
Or harbour unrepented sin."—
Lord Marmion turned him half aside,
And twice to clear his voice he tried,
Then pressed Sir David's hand,—
But nought, at length, in answer said;
And here their farther converse stayed,
Each ordering that his band
Should bowne† them with the rising day,
To Scotland's camp to take their way,—
Such was the King's command.

XXIII.

Early they took Dun-Edin's road,
And I could trace each step they trode,
Hill, brook, nor dell, nor rock, nor stone
Lies on the path to me unknown.
Much might it boast of storied lore,
But, passing such digression o'er,
Suffice it, that their route was laid
Across the furzy hills of Braid.
They passed the glen and scanty rill,
And climbed the opposing bank, until
They gained the top of Blackford hill.

XXIV.

Blackford! on whose uncultured breast,
Among the broom, the thorn, and whin,‡
A truant boy, I sought the nest,
Or listed, as I lay at rest.
While rose, on breezes thin,
The murmur of the city crowd,
And, from his steeple jangling loud,
Saint Giles's mingling din.

* The traditions concerning Bulmer and the spectre called *Lhare-dearg*, or Bloody-hand, may be found in an essay upon Fairy Superstitions, in the "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border."
† Make ready. ‡ Furze.

Now, from the summit to the plain,
Waves all the hill with yellow grain;
And o'er the landscape as I look,
Nought do I see unchanged remain,
Save the rude cliffs and chiming brook.
To me they make a heavy moan,
Of early friendships past and gone.

XXV.

But different far the change has been,
Since Marmion, from the crown
Of Blackford saw that martial scene
Upon the bent so brown;
Thousand pavilions, white as snow,
Spread o'er the Borough-moor below,*
Upland, and dale, and down:—
A thousand did I say? I ween,
Thousands on thousands there were seen,
That chequered all the heath between
The streamlet and the town;
In crossing ranks extending far,
Forming a camp irregular;
Oft giving way, where still there stood
Some reliques of the old oak-wood,
That darkly huge did intervene,
And tame the glaring white with green:
In these extended lines there lay
A martial's kingdom's vast array.

XXVI.

For from Hebudes, dark with rain,
To eastern Lodon's fertile plain,
And from the southern Redswire edge,
To farthest Rosse's rocky ledge;
From west to east, from south to north,
Scotland sent all her warriors forth.
Marmion might hear the mingled hum
Of myriads up the mountain come;

* The Borough, or Common Moor of Edinburgh, was of very great extent, reaching from the southern walls of the city to the bottom of Braid Hills. It was anciently a forest; and, in that state, was so great a nuisance, that the inhabitants of Edinburgh had permission granted to them of building wooden galleries, projecting over the street, in order to encourage them to consume the timber, which they seem to have done very effectually. When James IV. mustered the array of the kingdom there, in 1513, the Borough-moor was, according to Hawthornden, "a field spacious, and delightful by the shade of many stately and aged oaks." Upon that, and similar occasions, the royal standard is traditionally said to have been displayed from the Hare Stane; a high stone, now built into the wall, on the left of the highway leading towards Braid, not far from the head of Bruntsfield links. The Hare Stane probably derives its name from the British word *Har*, signifying an army.

The horses' tramp, and tingling clank,
Where chiefs reviewed their vassal rank,
And charger's shrilling neigh;
And see the shifting lines advance,
While frequent flashed, from shield and lance,
The sun's reflected ray.

XXVII.

Thin curling in the morning air,
The wreathes of failing smoke declare,
To embers now the brands decayed,
Where the night-watch their fires had made.
They saw, slow rolling on the plain,
Full many a baggage-cart and wain,
And dire artillery's clumsy car,
By sluggish oxen tugged to war;
And there were Borthwick's Sisters Seven,*
And culverins which France had given,†
Ill-omened gift! the guns remain
The conqueror's spoil on Flodden plain.

XXVIII.

Nor marked they less, where in the air
A thousand streamers flaunted fair;
Various in shape, device, and hue,
Green, sanguine, purple, red, and blue,
Broad, narrow, swallow-tailed, and square,
Scroll, pennon, pensil, bandrol,‡ there
O'er the pavilions flew.§
Highest, and midmost, was descried
The royal banner, floating wide;
The staff, a pine-tree strong and straight,
Pitched deeply in a massive stone,
Which still in memory is shown,
Yet bent beneath the standard's weight,
Whene'er the western wind unrolled,
With toil, the huge and cumbrous fold,
And gave to view the dazzling field,
Where in proud Scotland's royal shield,
The ruddy Lion ramped in gold.‖

* Seven Culverins so called, cast by one Borthwick.

† First edition:—

"By France's king to Scotland given."

‡ Each of these feudal ensigns intimated the different rank of those entitled to display them.

§ Patten (Account of Somerset's Expedition) gives a curious description of the Scottish mode of encampment, which he saw after the battle of Pinkey, in 1547.

‖ The well-known arms of Scotland. If you will believe Boethius and Buchanan, the double tressure round the shield, *counter fleur-de-lised*, or *lingued and armed azure*, was first assumed by Achaius, king of Scotland, contemporary of Charlemagne, and founder of the celebrated league with France; but later antiquaries make poor

XXIX.

Lord Marmion viewed the landscape bright,—
He viewed it with a chief's delight,—
Until within him burned his heart,
And lightning from his eye did part,
As on the battle-day;
Such glance did falcon never dart,
When stooping on his prey.
"Oh! well, Lord-Lion, hast thou said,
Thy King from warfare to dissuade
Were but a vain essay;
For, by Saint George, were that host mine,
Not power infernal, nor divine,
Should once to peace my soul incline,
Till I had dimmed their armour's shine
In glorious battle fray!"—
Answered the bard, of milder mood:
"Fair is the sight,—and yet 'twere good,
That kings would think withal,
When peace and wealth their land have blessed,
'Tis better to sit still at rest,
Than rise, perchance to fall."

XXX.

Still on the spot Lord Marmion stayed,
For fairer scene he ne'er surveyed.
When sated with the martial show
That peopled all the plain below,
The wandering eye could o'er it go,
And mark the distant city glow
With gloomy splendour red;
For on the smoke-wreaths, huge and slow,
That round her sable turrets flow,
The morning beams were shed,
And tinged them with a lustre proud,
Like that which streaks a thunder-cloud.
Such dusky grandeur clothed the height,
Where the huge castle holds its state,
And all the steep slope down,
Whose ridgy back heaves to the sky,
Piled deep and massy, close and high,
Mine own romantic town!
But northward far, with purer blaze,
On Ochil mountains fell the rays,
And as each heathy top they kissed,
It gleamed a purple amethyst.
Yonder the shores of Fife you saw;
Here Preston-Bay, and Berwick-Law;

Eochy, or Achy, little better than a sort of king of Brentford, whom old Grig (who has also swelled into Gregorius Magnus) associated with himself in the important duty of governing some part of the north-eastern coast of Scotland.

And, broad between them rolled,
The gallant Firth the eye might note,
Whose islands on its bosom float,
Like emeralds chased in gold.
Fitz-Eustace' heart felt closely pent;
As if to give his rapture vent,
The spur he to his charger lent,
And raised his bridle-hand,
And, making demi-volte in air,
Cried, "Where's the coward that would not dare
To fight for such a land!"
The Lindesay smiled his joy to see;
Nor Marmion's frown repressed his glee.

XXXI.

Thus while they looked, a flourish proud,
Where mingled trump, and clarion loud,
And fife and kettle-drum,
And sackbut deep, and psaltery,
And war-pipe, with discordant cry,
And cymbal clattering to the sky,
Making wild music bold and high,
Did up the mountain come;
The whilst the bells, with distant chime,
Merrily tolled the hour of prime,
And thus the Lindesay* spoke:—
"Thus clamour still the war-notes when
The King to mass his way has ta'en,
Or to Saint Catherine's of Sienne,
Or chapel of Saint Rocque.
To you they speak of martial fame;
But me remind of peaceful game,
When blither was their cheer.
Thrilling in Falkland-woods the air,
In signal none his steed should spare,
But strive which foremost might repair
To the downfall of the deer.

XXXII.

"Nor less," he said,—"when looking forth,
I view yon Empress of the North
Sit on her hilly throne;
Her palace's imperial bowers,
Her castle, proof to hostile powers,
Her stately halls, and holy towers—
Nor less," he said, "I moan,
To think that woe mischance may bring,
And how these merry bells may ring
The death-dirge of our gallant King,
Or, with their larum, call
The burghers forth to watch and ward,

* Lion, first edition.

'Gainst southern sack and fires to guard
Dun-Edin's leagueerd wall.—
But not, for my presaging thought,
Dream conquest sure, or cheaply bought!
Lord Marmion, I say nay:—
God is the guider of the field,
He breaks the champion's spear and shield,—
But thou thyself shalt say,
When joins yon host in deadly stowre,*
That England's dames must weep in bower
Her monks the death-mass sing;
For never saw'st thou such a power
Led on by such a King."
And now, down winding to the plain,
The barriers of the camp they gain,
And there they made a stay.—
There stays the Minstrel, till he fling
His hand o'er every Border string,
And fit his harp the pomp to sing,
Of Scotland's ancient Court and King,
In the succeeding lay.

INTRODUCTION TO CANTO FIFTH.

TO GEORGE ELLIS, ESQ.†

Edinburgh.

WHEN dark December glooms the day,
And takes our autumn joys away;
When short and scant the sunbeam throws,
Upon the weary waste of snows,
A cold and profitless regard,
Like patron on a needy bard;
When sylvan occupation's done,
And o'er the chimney rests the gun,
And hang, in idle trophy, near,
The game-pouch, fishing-rod, and spear;
When wiry terrier, rough and grim,
And greyhound with his length of limb,
And pointer, now employed no more,
Cumber our parlour's narrow floor;

* Conflict.

† This gentleman was distinguished for his talents in general literature. He contributed to the "Rolliad," and assisted Canning and Frere in the "Anti-Jacobin." He also edited "Specimens of Early English Poetry," and other works. A cordial intimacy existed between him and Sir Walter. Mr. Ellis died April 10, 1815.—*Annual Register*, 1815.

When in his stall the impatient steed
Is long condemned to rest and feed;
When from our snow-encircled home,
Scarce cares the hardiest step to roam,
Since path is none, save that to bring
The needful water from the spring;
When wrinkled news-page, thrice conned o'er,
Beguiles the dreary hour no more,
And darkling politician, crossed,
Inveighs against the lingering post,
And answering housewife sore complains
Of carriers' snow-impeded wains:
When such the country cheer, I come,
Well pleased to seek our city home;
For converse, and for books, to change
The Forest's melancholy range,
And welcome, with renewed delight,
The busy day, and social night.

Not here need my desponding rhyme
Lament the ravages of time,
As erst by Newark's riven towers,
And Ettricke stripped of forest bowers,*
True,—Caledonia's Queen is changed,†
Since on her dusky summit ranged,
Within its sleepy limits pent,
By bulwark, line, and battlement,
And flanking towers, and laky flood,
Guarded and garrisoned she stood,
Denying entrance or resort,
Save at each tall embattled port;
Above whose arch, suspended, hung
Portcullis spiked with iron prong.
That long is gone,—but not so long,
Since early closed, and opening late,
Jealous revolved the studded gate;
Whose task from eve to morning tide
A wicket churlishly supplied.
Stern then, and steel-girt was thy brow,
Dun-Edin! O, how altered now,
When safe amid thy mountain court
Thou sitt'st, like Empress at her sport,
And liberal, unconfined, and free,
Flinging thy white arms to the sea,‡

* See Introduction to Canto II.

† The old town of Edinburgh was secured on the north side by a lake, now drained, and on the south by a wall, which there was some attempt to make defensible even so late as 1745. The gates, and the greater part of the wall, have been pulled down, in the course of the late extensive and beautiful enlargement of the city.

‡ Since writing this line, I find I have inadvertently borrowed it

For thy dark cloud, with umbered lower,
That hung o'er cliff, and lake, and tower,
Thou gleam'st against the western ray
Ten thousand lines of brighter day.

Not she, the championess of old,
In Spenser's magic tale enrolled,—
She for the charmèd spear renowned,
Which forced each knight to kiss the ground,—
Not she more changed, when, placèd at rest,
What time she was Malbecco's guest,*
She gave to flow her maiden vest;
When from the corslet's grasp relieved,
Free to the sight her bosom heaved;
Sweet was her blue eye's modest smile,
Erst hidden by the aventayle;
And down her shoulders graceful rolled
Her locks profuse, of paly gold.
They who whilome, in midnight fight,
Had marvelled at her matchless might,
No less her maiden charms approved,
But looking liked, and liking loved.†
The sight could jealous pangs beguile,
And charm Malbecco's cares awhile;
And he, the wandering Squire of Dames,
Forgot his Columbella's claims,
And passion, erst unknown, could gain
The breast of blunt Sir Satyrane;
Nor durst light Paridel advance,
Bold as he was, a looser glance,—
She charmed, at once, and tamed the heart,
Incomparable Britomarte!

So thou, fair City! disarrayed
Of battled wall, and rampart's aid,
As stately seem'st, but lovelier far
Than in that panoply of war.
Nor deem that from thy fenceless throne
Strength and security are flown;
Still, as of yore, Queen of the North!
Still canst thou send thy children forth.
Ne'er readier at alarm-bell's call
Thy burghers rose to man thy wall,

almost verbatim, though with somewhat a different meaning, from a chorus in "Caractacus:"—

"Britain heard the descant bold,
She flung her white arms o'er the sea,
Proud in her leafy bosom to enfold
The freight of harmony."

* See "The Fairy Queen," book iii. canto ix.
† "For every one her liked, and every one her loved."—*Spenser.*

Than now, in danger, shall be thine,
Thy dauntless voluntary line;
For fosse and turret proud to stand,
Their breasts the bulwarks of the land.
Thy thousands, trained to martial toil,
Full red would stain their native soil,
Ere from thy mural crown there fell
The slightest knosp,* or pinnacle.
And if it come,—as come it may,
Dun-Edin! that eventful day,—
Renowned for hospitable deed,
That virtue much with heaven may plead,
In patriarchal times whose care
Descending angels deigned to share;
That claim may wrestle blessings down
On those who fight for the Good Town,
Destined in every age to be
Refuge of injured royalty;
Since first, when conquering York arose,
To Henry† meek she gave repose,
Till late, with wonder, grief, and awe,
Great Bourbon's reliques, sad she saw.

Truce to these thoughts! for, as they rise,
How gladly I avert mine eyes,
Bodings, or true or false, to change,
For fiction's fair romantic range,
Or for Tradition's dubious light,
That hovers 'twixt the day and night:
Dazzling alternately and dim,
Her wavering lamp I'd rather trim,
Knights, squires, and lovely dames to see,
Creation of my fantasy,
Than gaze abroad on reeky fen,
And make of mists invading men.—
Who loves not more the night of June
Than dull December's gloomy noon?
The moonlight than the fog of frost?
And can we say, which cheats the most?

But who shall teach my harp to gain
A sound of the romantic strain,
Whose Anglo-Norman tones whilere‡
Could win the Second Henry's ear,
Famed Beauclerc called, for that he loved
The minstrel, and his lay approved?

* A term in architecture.

† Henry VI., with his queen, his heir, and the chiefs of his family, fled to Scotland after the fatal battle of Towton. Queen Margaret certainly came to Edinburgh, though it seems doubtful whether her husband did so. Their hospitable reception called forth on Scotland the encomium of Molinet, a contemporary poet.

‡ Formerly.

Who shall these lingering notes redeem,
Decaying on Oblivion's stream;
Such notes as from the Breton tongue
Marie translated, Blondel sung?
O! born Time's ravage to repair,
And make thy dying Muse thy care:
Who, when his scythe her hoary foe
Was poising for the final blow,
The weapon from his hand could wring,
And break his glass, and shear his wing,
And bid, reviving in his strain,
The gentle poet live again;
Thou, who canst give to lightest lay
An unpedantic moral gay,
Nor less the dullest theme bid flit
On wings of unexpected wit;
In letters as in life approved,
Example honoured, and beloved,—
Dear ELLIS! to the bard impart
A lesson of thy magic art,
To win at once the head and heart,—
At once to charm, instruct, and mend,
My guide, my pattern, and my friend!

Such minstrel lesson to bestow
Be long thy pleasing task,—but, O!
No more by thy example teach
What few can practise, all can preach;
With even patience to endure
Lingering disease, and painful cure,
And boast affliction's pangs subdued
By mild and manly fortitude.
Enough, the lesson has been given:
Forbid the repetition, Heaven!

Come, listen, then! for thou hast known,
And loved the Minstrel's varying tone;
Who, like his Border sires of old,
Waked a wild measure, rude and bold,
Till Windsor's oaks, and Ascot plain
With wonder heard the northern strain.
Come, listen!—bold in thy applause,
The Bard shall scorn pedantic laws;
And, as the ancient art could stain
Achievements on the storied pane,
Irregularly traced and planned,
But yet so glowing and so grand;
So shall he strive, in changeful hue,
Field, feast, and combat, to renew,
And loves, and arms, and harpers' glee,
And all the pomp of chivalry.

CANTO FIFTH.

THE COURT.

I.

The train has left the hills of Braid;
The barrier guard have open made
(So Lindesay bade) the palisade,
That closed the tented ground,
Their men the warders backward drew,*
And carried pikes as they rode through,
Into its ample bound.
Fast ran the Scottish warriors there,
Upon the Southern band to stare;
And envy with their wonder rose,
To see such well-appointed foes;
Such length of shafts, such mighty bows,
So huge, that many simply thought,
But for a vaunt such weapons wrought;
And little deemed their force to feel,
Through links of mail, and plates of steel,
When, rattling upon Flodden vale
The cloth-yard arrows flew like hail.†

II.

Nor less did Marmion's skilful view
Glance every line and squadron through!
And much he marvelled one small land
Could marshal forth such various band:
For men-at-arms were here,
Heavily sheathed in mail and plate,
Like iron towers for strength and weight,
On Flemish steeds of bone and height,
With battle-axe and spear.
Young knights and squires, a lighter train,
Practised their chargers on the plain,
By aid of leg, of hand, and rein,
Each warlike feat to show;
To pass, to wheel, the croupe to gain,‡
And high curvett, that not in vain
The sword-sway might descend amain
On foeman's casque below.

* This line is not found in the first edition.

† This is no poetical exaggeration. In some of the counties of England, distinguished for archery, shafts of this extraordinary length were actually used. The Scottish, according to Ascham, had a proverb, that every English archer carried under his belt twenty-four Scots, in allusion to his bundle of unerring shafts.

‡ "The most useful *air*, as the Frenchmen term it, is *territerr*; the *courbettes*, *cabrioles*, or *un pas et un sault*, being fitter for horses of parade and triumph than for soldiers; yet I cannot deny but a *demivolte* with *courbettes*, so that they be not too high, may be use-

He saw the hardy burghers* there
March armed, on foot, with faces bare,
For visor they wore none,
Nor waving plume, nor crest of knight,
But burnished were their corslets bright,
Their brigantines, and gorgets light,
Like very silver shone.
Long pikes they had for standing fight,
Two-handed swords they wore,
And many wielded mace of weight,
And bucklers bright they bore.

III.

On foot the yeoman too,† but dressed
In his steel jack, a swarthy vest,
With iron quilted well;
Each at his back, a slender store,
His forty days' provision bore,
As feudal statutes tell.
His arms were halbard, axe, or spear,
A cross-bow there, a hagbut‡ here,
A dagger-knife and brand.—
Sober he seemed, and sad of cheer,
As loth to leave his cottage dear,
And march to foreign strand;
Or musing, who would guide his steer,
To till the fallow land.
Yet deem not in his thoughtful eye
Did aught of dastard terror lie;—

ful in a fight or *meslee*; for, as Labroue hath it, in his Book of Horsemanship, Monsieur de Montmorency, having a horse that was excellent in performing the *demivolte*, did, with his sword, strike down two adversaries from their horses in a tourney, where divers of the prime gallants of France did meet; for, taking his time, when the horse was in the height of his *courbette*, and discharging a blow then, his sword fell with such weight and force upon the two cavaliers, one after another, that he struck them from their horses to the ground."—*Lord Herbert of Cherbury's Life.*

* The Scottish burgesses were, like yeomen, appointed to be armed with bows and sheaves, sword, buckler, knife, spear, or a good axe instead of a bow, if worth 100*l.*: their armour to be of white or bright harness. They wore *white hats, i. e.* bright steel caps, without crest or visor. By an act of James IV., their *weapon-schawings* are appointed to be held four times a year under the aldermen or bailiffs.

† Bows and quivers were in vain recommended to the peasantry of Scotland, by repeated statutes; spears and axes seem universally to have been used instead of them. Their defensive armour was the plate-jack, hauberk, or brigantine; and their missile weapons, cross-bows and culverins. When the feudal array of the kingdom was called forth, each man was obliged to appear with forty days' provision. When this was expended, which took place before the battle of Flodden, the army melted away of course. Almost all the Scottish forces, except a few knights, men-at-arms, and the Border-prickers, who formed excellent light cavalry, acted upon foot.

‡ A kind of fire-arm.

More dreadful far his ire,
Than theirs, who, scorning danger's name,
In eager mood to battle came,
Their valour like light straw on flame,
A fierce but fading fire.

IV.

Not so the Borderer:—bred to war,
He knew the battle's din afar,
And joyed to hear it swell.
His peaceful day was slothful ease;
Nor harp, nor pipe, his ear could please,
Like the loud slogan yell.
On active steed, with lance and blade,
The light-armed pricker plied his trade,—
Let nobles fight for fame;
Let vassals follow where they lead,
Burghers, to guard their townships, bleed,
But war's the Borderer's game.
Their gain, their glory, their delight,
To sleep the day, maraud the night,
O'er mountain, moss, and moor;
Joyful to fight they took their way,
Scarce caring who might win the day,
Their booty was secure.
These, as Lord Marmion's train passed by,
Looked on, at first, with careless eye,
Nor marvelled aught, well taught to know
The form and force of English bow.
But when they saw the lord arrayed
In splendid arms, and rich brocade,
Each Borderer to his kinsman said,—
"Hist, Ringan! seest thou there!
Canst guess which road they'll homeward ride?
O! could we but, on Border-side,
By Eusedale glen, or Liddel's tide,
Beset a prize so fair!
That fangless Lion, too, their guide,
Might chance to lose his glistering* hide;
Brown Maudlin of that doublet pied
Could make a kirtle rare."

V.

Next Marmion marked the Celtic race,
Of different language, form, and face,
A various race of man;
Just then the chiefs their tribes arrayed,
And wild and garish† semblance made,
The chequered trews,‡ and belted plaid,
And varying notes the war-pipes brayed
To every varying clan;

* Glittering. † Splendid. ‡ Trousers.

Wild through their red or sable hair
Looked out their eyes, with savage stare,
  On Marmion as he passed;
Their legs, above the knee, were bare;
Their frame was sinewy, short, and spare,
  And hardened to the blast;
Of taller race, the chiefs they own
Were by the eagle's plumage known.
The hunted red-deer's undressed hide
Their hairy buskins well supplied;
The graceful bonnet decked their head;
Back from their shoulders hung the plaid;
A broad-sword of unwieldy length,
A dagger, proved for edge and strength,
  A studded targe they wore,
And quivers, bows, and shafts,—but, O!
Short was the shaft, and weak the bow,
  To that which England bore.
The Isles-men carried at their backs
The ancient Danish battle-axe.
They raised a wild and wondering cry,
As with his guide rode Marmion by.
Loud were their clamouring tongues, as when
The clanging sea-fowl leave the fen,
And, with their cries discordant mixed,
Grumbled and yelled the pipes betwixt.

VI.

Thus through the Scottish camp they passed,
And reached the City gate at last,
Where all around, a wakeful guard,
Armed burghers kept their watch and ward.
Well had they cause of jealous fear,
When lay encamped, in field so near,
The Borderer and the Mountaineer.
As through the bustling streets they go,
All was alive with martial show;
At every turn, with dinning clang,
The armourer's anvil clashed and rang;
Or toiled the swarthy smith, to wheel
The bar that arms the charger's heel;
Or axe, or falchion, to the side
Of jarring grindstone was applied.
  Page, groom, and squire, with hurrying pace,
  Through street, and lane, and market-place,
    Bore lance, or casque, or sword;
  While burghers, with important face,
    Described each new-come lord,
  Discussed his lineage, told his name,
  His following,* and his warlike fame.—

* Feudal retainers.

The Lion led to lodging meet,
Which high o'erlooked the crowded street;
There must the Baron rest,
Till past the hour of vesper tide,
And then to Holy-Rood must ride,—
Such was the King's behest.
Meanwhile the Lion's care assigns
A banquet rich, and costly wines,*
To Marmion and his train.
And when the appointed hour succeeds,†
The Baron dons his peaceful weeds,
And following Lindesay as he leads,
The palace-halls they gain.

VII.

Old Holy-Rood rung merrily,
That night, with wassel, mirth, and glee:
King James within her princely bower
Feasted the chiefs of Scotland's power,
Summoned to spend the parting hour;
For he had charged, that his array
Should southward march by break of day.
Well loved that splendid monarch aye
The banquet and the song:
By day the tourney, and by night
The merry dance, traced fast and light,
The masquers quaint, the pageant bright,
The revel loud and long.
This feast outshone his banquets past;
It was his blithest—and his last.
The dazzling lamps, from gallery gay,
Cast on the court a dancing ray;
Here to the harp did minstrels sing;
There ladies touched a softer string;
With long-eared cap, and motley vest,
The licensed fool retailed his jest;
His magic tricks the juggler plied;
At dice and draughts the gallants vied:
While some, in close recess apart,
Courted the ladies of their heart,
Nor courted them in vain;
For often, in the parting hour,
Victorious love asserts his power
O'er coldness and disdain;
And flinty is her heart, can view,
To battle march a lover true,—
Can hear, perchance, his last adieu,
Nor own her share of pain.

* In all transactions of great or petty importance, and among whomsoever taking place, it would seem that a present of wine was a uniform and an indispensable preliminary.

† This line is not in the first edition.

VIII.

Through this mixed crowd of glee and game,
The King to greet Lord Marmion came,
While, reverent, all made room.
An easy task it was, I trow,
King James's manly form to know,
Although, his courtesy to show,
He doffed, to Marmion bending low,
His broidered cap and plume.
For royal were his garb and mien,
His cloak, of crimson velvet piled,
Trimmed with the fur of marten wild;
His vest, of changeful satin sheen,
The dazzled eye beguiled;
His gorgeous collar hung adown,
Wrought with the badge of Scotland's crown,
The thistle brave, of old renown;
His trusty blade, Toledo right,
Descended frem a baldric bright;
White were his buskins, on the heel
His spurs inlaid of gold and steel;
His bonnet, all of crimson fair,
Was buttoned with a ruby rare:
And Marmion deemed he ne'er had seen
A prince of such a noble mien.

IX.

The Monarch's form was middle size;
For feat of strength, or exercise,
Shaped in proportion fair;
And hazel was his eagle eye,
And auburn of the darkest dye,
His short curled beard and hair.
Light was his footstep in the dance,
And firm his stirrup in the lists;
And, oh! he had that merry glance,
That seldom lady's heart resists.
Lightly from fair to fair he flew,
And loved to plead, lament, and sue;—
Suit lightly won, and short-lived pain!
For monarchs seldom sigh in vain.
I said he joyed in banquet-bower;
But, 'mid his mirth, 'twas often strange,
How suddenly his cheer would change,
His look o'ercast and lower,
If, in a sudden turn, he felt
The pressure of his iron belt,*
That bound his breast in penance-pain,
In memory of his father slain.

* Few readers need to be reminded of this belt, to the weight of which James added certain ounces every year that he lived. Pitscottie founds his belief that James was not slain in the battle of Flodden,

Even so 'twas strange how, evermore,
Soon as the passing pang was o'er,
Forward he rushed, with double glee,
Into the stream of revelry:
Thus, dim-seen object of affright,
Startles the courser in his flight,
And half he halts, half springs aside;
But feels the quickening spur applied,
And, straining on the tightened rein,
Scours doubly swift o'er hill and plain.

X.

O'er James's heart, the courtiers say,
Sir Hugh the Heron's wife* held sway:
To Scotland's court she came,
To be a hostage for her lord,
Who Cessford's gallant heart had gored,
And with the King to make accord,
Had sent his lovely dame.
Nor to that lady free alone
Did the gay King allegiance own;
For the fair Queen of France
Sent him a turquois ring,† and glove,
And charged him, as her knight and love,
For her to break a lance;
And strike three strokes with Scottish brand,
And march three miles on Southron‡ land,
And bid the banners of his band
In English breezes dance.
And thus, for France's Queen, he dressed
His manly limbs in mailed vest;
And thus admitted English fair,
His inmost counsels still to share;
And thus, for both, he madly planned
The ruin of himself and land!
And yet, the sooth to tell,

because the English never had this token of the iron belt to show to any Scottish man. The person and character of James are delineated according to our best historians. His romantic disposition, which led him highly to relish gaiety, approaching to license, was, at the same time, tinged with enthusiastic devotion. These propensities sometimes formed a strange contrast. He was wont, during his fits of devotion, to assume the dress, and conform to the rules, of the order of Franciscans; and when he had thus done penance for some time in Stirling, to plunge again into the tide of pleasure. Probably, too, he sometimes laughed at the superstitious observances to which he at other times subjected himself.

* It has been already noticed, that King James's acquaintance with Lady Heron of Ford did not commence until he marched into England. Our historians impute to the king's infatuated passion the delays that led to the fatal defeat of Flodden.

† A turquois ring; probably this fatal gift is, with James's sword and dagger, preserved in the College of Heralds, London.

‡ First edition, "English."

Nor England's fair, nor France's Queen,
Were worth one pearl-drop, bright and sheen,
From Margaret's eyes that fell,—
His own Queen Margaret, who, in Lithgow's bower,
All lonely sat, and wept the weary hour.

XI.

The Queen sits lone in Lithgow pile,
And weeps the weary day,
The war against her native soil,
Her Monarch's risk in battle broil;—
And in gay Holy-Rood, the while,
Dame Heron rises with a smile
Upon the harp to play.
Fair was her rounded arm, as o'er
The strings her fingers flew:
And as she touched, and tuned them all,
Even her bosom's rise and fall
Was plainer given to view;
For, all for heat, was laid aside
Her wimple, and her hood untied.
And first she pitched her voice to sing,
Then glanced her dark eye on the King,
And then around the silent ring;
And laughed, and blushed, and oft did say
Her pretty oath, by Yea, and Nay,
She could not, would not, durst not play!
At length, upon the harp, with glee,
Mingled with arch simplicity,
A soft, yet lively, air she rung,
While thus the wily lady sung.

XII.

LOCHINVAR.

LADY HERON'S SONG.

O, young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
Through all the wide Border his steed was the best,
And save his good broad-sword he weapons had none:
He rode all unarmed, and he rode all alone.
So faithful in love, and so dauntless in war,
There never was knight like the young Lochinvar.

He stayed not for brake, and he stopped not for stone,
He swam the Eske river where ford there was none;
But, ere he alighted at Netherby gate,
The bride had consented, the gallant came late:
For a laggard in love, and a dastard in war,
Was to wed the fair Ellen of brave Lochinvar.

So boldly he entered the Netherby hall,
Among bride's-men and kinsmen, and brothers and all.
Then spoke the bride's father, his hand on his sword,
(For the poor craven bridegroom said never a word,)

"O come ye in peace here, or come ye in war,
Or to dance at our bridal, young Lord Lochinvar?"

"I long wooed your daughter, my suit you denied;—
Love swells like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide—
And now I am come, with this lost love of mine,
To lead but one measure, drink one cup of wine.
There are maidens in Scotland more lovely by far,
That would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar."

The bride kissed the goblet; the knight took it up,
He quaffed off the wine, and he threw down the cup,
She looked down to blush, and she looked up to sigh,
With a smile on her lips and a tear in her eye.
He took her soft hand, ere her mother could bar,—
"Now tread we a measure!" said young Lochinvar.

So stately his form, and so lovely her face,
That never a hall such a galliard did grace;
While her mother did fret, and her father did fume,
And the bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume;
And the bride-maidens whispered, "'Twere better by far
To have matched our fair cousin with young Lochinvar."

One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,
When they reached the hall door and the charger stood near;
So light to the croupe the fair lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprung!—
"She is won! we are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;
They'll have fleet steeds that follow," quoth young Lochinvar.

There was mounting 'mong Græmes of the Netherby clan;
Forsters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, they rode and they ran:
There was racing, and chasing, on Cannobie Lee,
But the lost bride of Netherby ne'er did they see.
So daring in love, and so dauntless in war,
Have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?

XIII.

The Monarch o'er the syren hung,
And beat the measure as she sung:
And, pressing closer, and more near,
He whispered praises in her ear.
In loud applause the courtiers vied;
And ladies winked and spoke aside.
The witching dame to Marmion threw
A glance, where seemed to reign
The pride that claims applauses due,
And of her royal conquest, too,
A real or feigned disdain:
Familiar was the look, and told,
Marmion and she were friends of old.
The King observed their meeting eyes,
With something like displeased surprise:

For monarchs ill can rivals brook,
Even in a word, or smile, or look.
Straight took he forth the parchment broad,
Which Marmion's high commission showed:
"Our Borders sacked by many a raid,
Our peaceful liege-men robbed," he said;
"On day of truce our Warden slain,
Stout Barton killed, his vassals ta'en—
Unworthy were we here to reign,
Should these for vengeance cry in vain:
Our full defiance, hate, and scorn,
Our herald has to Henry borne."

XIV.

He paused, and led where Douglas stood,
And with stern eye the pageant viewed:
I mean that Douglas, sixth of yore,
Who coronet of Angus bore,
And, when his blood and heart were high,
Did the third James in camp defy,*
And all his minions led to die
On Lauder's dreary flat:
Princes and favourites long grew tame,
And trembled at the homely name
Of Archibald Bell-the-Cat.†
The same who left the dusky vale
Of Hermitage in Liddesdale,
Its dungeons, and its towers,
Where Bothwell's turrets brave the air,
And Bothwell bank is blooming fair,
To fix his princely bowers.
Though now, in age, he had laid down
His armour for the peaceful gown,
And for a staff his brand,
Yet often would flash forth the fire,
That could, in youth, a monarch's ire
And minion's pride withstand;
And e'en that day, at council board,
Unapt to soothe his sovereign's mood,
Against the war had Angus stood,‡
And chafed his royal lord.

* First edition:—

"King James's minions led to die."

† Archibald Douglas, earl of Angus, a man remarkable for strength of body and mind, acquired the popular name of *Bell-the-Cat.*

‡ Angus was an old man when the war against England was resolved upon. He earnestly spoke against that measure from its commencement; and, on the eve of the battle of Flodden, remonstrated so freely on the impolicy of fighting, that the king said to him with scorn and indignation, "If he was afraid, he might go home." The earl burst into tears at this insupportable insult, and retired accordingly, leaving his sons, George, master of Angus, and Sir William of Glenbervie, to command his followers. They were both slain in the

XV.

His giant-form, like ruined tower,
Though fallen its muscles' brawny vaunt,
Huge-boned, and tall, and grim, and gaunt,
Seemed o'er the gaudy scene to lower:
His locks and beard in silver grew;
His eyebrows kept their sable hue.
Near Douglas when the Monarch stood,
His bitter speech he thus pursued:—
"Lord Marmion, since these letters say
That in the North you needs must stay,
While slightest hopes of peace remain,
Uncourteous speech it were, and stern,
To say—Return to Lindisfarne,
Until my herald come again.—
Then rest you in Tantallon Hold;*
Your host shall be the Douglas bold,—
A chief unlike his sires of old.
He wears their motto on his blade,
Their blazon o'er his towers displayed;
Yet loves his sovereign to oppose,
More than to face his country's foes.
And, I bethink me, by Saint Stephen,
But e'en this morn to me was given
A prize, the first-fruits of the war,
Ta'en by a galley from Dunbar,
A bevy of the maids of heaven.
Under your guard, these holy maids
Shall safe return to cloister shades,
And, while they at Tantallon stay,
Requiem for Cochran's soul may say."
And, with the slaughtered favourite's name,
Across the Monarch's brow there came
A cloud of ire, remorse, and shame.

XVI.

In answer nought could Angus speak;
His proud heart swelled well nigh to break:
He turned aside, and down his cheek
A burning tear there stole.
His hand the monarch sudden took,
That sight his kind heart could not brook:
"Now, by the Bruce's soul,

battle, with two hundred gentlemen of the name of Douglas. The aged earl, broken-hearted at the calamities of his house and country, retired into a religious house, where he died about a year after the field of Flodden.

*The ruins of Tantallon Castle occupy a high rock projecting into the German Ocean, about two miles east of North Berwick. It was the principal castle of the Douglas family; and when the earl of Angus was banished, in 1527, it continued to hold out against James V.

Angus, my hasty speech forgive!
For sure as doth his spirit live,
As he said of the Douglas old,
I well may say of you,—
That never king did subject hold,
In speech more free, in war more bold,
More tender, and more true:
Forgive me, Douglas, once again."
And, while the King his hand did strain,
The old man's tears fell down like rain.
To seize the moment Marmion tried,
And whispered to the King aside:
"Oh! let such tears unwonted plead
For respite short from dubious deed!
A child will weep a bramble's smart,
A maid to see her sparrow part,
A stripling for a woman's heart:
But woe awaits a country, when
She sees the tears of bearded men.
Then, oh! what omen, dark and high,
When Douglas wets his manly eye!"—

XVII.

Displeased was James, that stranger viewed
And tampered with his changing mood.
"Laugh those that can, weep those that may,"
Thus did the fiery Monarch say,
"Southward I march by break of day;
And if within Tantallon strong,
The good Lord Marmion tarries long,
Perchance our meeting next may fall
At Tamworth, in his castle-hall."—
The haughty Marmion felt the taunt,
And answered, grave, the royal vaunt:
"Much honoured were my humble home,
If in its halls King James should come;
But Nottingham has archers good,
And Yorkshire men are stern of mood;
Northumbrian prickers wild and rude.
On Derby Hills the paths are steep;
In Ouse and Tyne the fords are deep;
And many a banner will be torn,
And many a knight to earth be borne,
And many a sheath of arrows spent,
Ere Scotland's King shall cross the Trent:
Yet pause, brave prince, while yet you may."
The Monarch lightly turned away,
And to his nobles loud did call,—
"Lords, to the dance,—a hall! a hall!"*
Himself his cloak and sword flung by,
And led Dame Heron gallantly;

* The ancient cry to make room for a dance, or pageant.

And minstrels, at the royal order,
Rung out—"Blue Bonnets o'er the Border."

XVIII.

Leave we these revels now, to tell
What to Saint Hilda's maids befell,
Whose galley, as they sailed again
To Whitby, by a Scot was ta'en.
Now at Dun-Edin did they bide,
Till James should of their fate decide;
And soon, by his command,
Were gently summoned to prepare
To journey under Marmion's care,
As escort honoured, safe, and fair,
Again to English land.
The Abbess told her chaplet o'er,
Nor knew which Saint she should implore;
For when she thought of Constance, sore
She feared Lord Marmion's mood.
And judge what Clara must have felt!
The sword, that hung in Marmion's belt,
Had drunk De Wilton's blood.
Unwittingly, King James had given,
As guard to Whitby's shades,
The man most dreaded under heaven
By these defenceless maids;
Yet what petition could avail,
Or who would listen to the tale
Of woman, prisoner, and nun,
'Mid bustle of a war begun;
They deemed it hopeless to avoid
The convoy of their dangerous guide.

XIX.

Their lodging, so the King assigned,
To Marmion's, as their guardian, joined;
And thus it fell, that, passing nigh,
The Palmer caught the Abbess' eye,
Who warned him by a scroll,
She had a secret to reveal,
That much concerned the Church's weal,
And health of sinner's soul;
And, with deep charge of secrecy,
She named a place to meet,
Within an open balcony,
That hung from dizzy pitch, and high,
Above the stately street;
To which, as common to each home,
At night they might in secret come.

XX.

At night in secret there they came,
The Palmer and the holy dame.

The moon among the clouds rode high,
And all the city hum was by.
Upon the street, where late before
Did din of war and warriors roar,
You might have heard a pebble fall,
A beetle hum, a cricket sing,
An owlet flap his boding wing
On Giles's steeple tall.
The antique buildings, climbing high,
Whose Gothic frontlets sought the sky,
Were here wrapt deep in shade:
There on their brows the moonbeam broke,
Through the faint wreaths of silvery smoke,
And on the casements played.
And other light was none to see,
Save torches gliding far,
Before some chieftain of degree,
Who left the royal revelry
To bowne him for the war.—
A solemn scene the Abbess chose;
A solemn hour, her secret to disclose.

XXI.

"O, holy Palmer!" she began,—
"For sure he must be sainted man,
Whose blessèd feet have trod the ground
Where the Redeemer's tomb is found;—
For his dear Church's sake, my tale
Attend, nor deem of light avail,
Though I must speak of worldly love,—
How vain to those who wed above!
De Wilton and Lord Marmion wooed
Clara de Clare, of Gloster's blood;
(Idle it were of Whitby's dame,
To say of that same blood I came;)
And once, when jealous rage was high,
Lord Marmion said despiteously,
Wilton was traitor in his heart,
And had made league with Martin Swart,*
When he came here on Simnel's part;
And only cowardice did restrain
His rebel aid on Stokefield's plain,—
And down he threw his glove:—the thing
Was tried, as wont, before the King;
Where frankly did De Wilton own
That Swart in Guelders he had known;
And that between them then there went
Some scroll of courteous compliment

* A German general, who commanded the auxiliaries sent by the duchess of Burgundy with Lambert Simnel. He was defeated and killed at Stokefield, 6th June, 1487. The name of this German general is preserved by that of the field of battle, which is called after him, Swart-moor.

For this he to his castle sent;
But when his messenger returned,
Judge how De Wilton's fury burned!
For in his packet there were laid
Letters that claimed disloyal aid,
And proved King Henry's cause betrayed.
His fame, thus blighted, in the field
He strove to clear, by spear and shield;—
To clear his fame in vain he strove,
For wondrous are His ways above!
Perchance some form was unobserved;
Perchance in prayer or faith he swerved;*
Else how could guiltless champion quail,
Or how the blessed ordeal fail?

XXII.

"His squire, who now De Wilton saw
As recreant doomed to suffer law,
Repentant, owned in vain,
That, while he had the scrolls in care,
A stranger maiden, passing fair,
Had drenched him with a beverage rare:—
His words no faith could gain.
With Clare alone he credence won,
Who, rather than wed Marmion,
Did to Saint Hilda's shrine repair,
To give our house her livings fair,
And die a vestal vot'ress there.
The impulse from the earth was given,
But bent her to the paths of heaven.
A purer heart, a lovelier maid,
Ne'er sheltered her in Whitby's shade,
No, not since Saxon Edelfled;
Only one trace of earthly strain,
That for her lover's loss
She cherishes a sorrow vain,
And murmurs at the cross.—
And then her heritage;—it goes
Along the banks of Tame;
Deep fields of grain the reaper mows,
In meadows rich the heifer lows,
The falconer, and huntsman, knows
Its woodlands for the game.
Shame were it to Saint Hilda dear,
And I, her humble vot'ress here,
Should do a deadly sin;

* It was early necessary for those who felt themselves obliged to believe in the divine judgment being enunciated in the trial by duel, to find salvos for the strange and obviously precarious chances of the combat. Various curious evasive shifts, used by those who took up an unrighteous quarrel, were supposed sufficient to convert it into a just one.

Her temple spoiled before mine eyes,
If this false Marmion such a prize
By my consent should win;
Yet hath our boisterous Monarch sworn,
That Clare shall from our house be torn,
And grievous cause have I to fear,
Such mandate doth Lord Marmion bear.

XXIII.

"Now, prisoner, helpless, and betrayed
To evil power, I claim thine aid:
By every step that thou hast trod
To holy shrine, and grotto dim;
By every martyr's tortured limb·
By angel, saint, and seraphim,
And by the Church of God!
For mark:—When Wilton was betrayed,
And with his squire forged letters laid,
She was, alas!—that sinful maid,
By whom the deed was done,—
O! shame and horror to be said,—
She was a perjured nun!
No clerk in all the land, like her,
Traced quaint and varying character.
Perchance you may a marvel deem,
That Marmion's paramour
(For such vile thing she was) should scheme
Her lover's nuptial hour;
But o'er him thus she hoped to gain,
As privy to his honour's stain,
Illimitable power:
For this she secretly retained
Each proof that might the plot reveal,
Instructions with his hand and seal;
And thus Saint Hilda deigned,
Through sinner's perfidy impure,
Her house's glory to secure,
And Clare's immortal weal.

XXIV.

"'Twere long, and needless, here to tell,
How to my hand these papers fell;
With me they must not stay.
Saint Hilda keep her Abbess true!
Who knows what outrage he might do,
While journeying by the way?
O! blessèd Saint, if e'er again
I venturous leave thy calm domain,
To travel or by land or main,
Deep penance may I pay!—
Now, saintly Palmer, mark my prayer
I give this packet to thy care,
For thee to stop they will not dare;

And, O! with cautious speed,
To Wolsey's hand the papers bring,
That he may show them to the King;
And for thy well-earned meed,
Thou holy man, at Whitby's shrine,
A weekly mass shall still be thine,
While priests can sing and read.—
What ail'st thou?—Speak!"—For as he took
The charge, a strong emotion shook
His frame; and, ere reply,
They heard a faint, yet shrilly tone,
Like distant clarion, feebly blown,
That on the breeze did die;
And loud the Abbess shrieked in fear,
"Saint Withold save us!—what is here!
Look at yon city cross!
See on its battled tower appear
Phantoms, that scutcheons seem to rear,
And blazoned banners toss!"—

XXV.

Dun-Edin's cross,* a pillared stone,
Rose on a turret octagon;
(But now is razed that monument,
Whence royal edict rang,
And voice of Scotland's law was sent,
In glorious trumpet clang.
O! be his tomb as lead to lead,
Upon its dull destroyer's head!—
A minstrel's malison† is said.)
Then on its battlements they saw
A vision, passing Nature's law,
Strange, wild, and dimly seen;
Figures, that seemed to rise and die,
Gibber and sign, advance and fly,
While nought confirmed could ear or eye
Discern of sound or mien.
Yet darkly did it seem, as there
Heralds and pursuivants prepare
With trumpet sound, and blazon fair,
A summons to proclaim;
But indistinct the pageant proud,
As fancy forms of midnight cloud,
When flings the moon upon her shroud
A wavering tinge of flame;
It flits, expands, and shifts, till loud,
From midmost of the spectre crowd,
This awful summons came:‡—

* The Cross of Edinburgh was an ancient and curious structure. It was destroyed in 1756. From the top of the cross, so long as it remained, the heralds published the acts of parliament. † Curse.

‡ This supernatural citation is mentioned by all our Scottish historians.

XXVI.

"Prince, prelate, potentate, and peer,
Whose names I now shall call,
Scottish, or foreigner, give ear!
Subjects of him who sent me here,
At his tribunal to appear,
I summon one and all:
I cite you by each deadly sin,
That e'er hath soiled your hearts within;
I cite you by each brutal lust,
That e'er defiled your earthly dust,—
By wrath, by pride, by fear,
By each o'er-mastering passion's tone,
By the dark grave, and dying groan!
When forty days are passed and gone
I cite you at your Monarch's throne
To answer and appear."—
Then thundered forth a roll of names:
The first was thine, unhappy James!
Then all thy nobles came;
Crawford, Glencairn, Montrose, Argyle,
Ross, Bothwell, Forbes, Lennox, Lyle,—
Why should I tell their separate style?
Each chief of birth and fame,
Of Lowland, Highland, Border, Isle,
Fore-doomed to Flodden's carnage pile,
Was cited there by name;
And Marmion, Lord of Fontenaye,
Of Lutterward and Scrivelbaye,
De Wilton, erst of Aberley,
The self-same thundering voice did say.—
But then another spoke:
"Thy fatal summons I deny,
And thine infernal lord defy,
Appealing me to Him on High,
Who burst the sinner's yoke."
At that dread accent, with a scream,
Parted the pageant like a dream,
The summoner was gone.
Prone on her face the Abbess fell,
And fast, and fast, her beads did tell;
Her nuns came, startled by the yell,
And found her there alone.
She marked not, at the scene aghast,
What time, or how, the Palmer passed.

XXVII.

Shift we the scene.—The camp doth move,
Dun-Edin's streets are empty now,
Save when, for weal of those they love,
To pray the prayer, and vow the vow,

The tottering child, the anxious fair,
The grey-haired sire with pious care,
To chapels and to shrines repair.—
Where is the Palmer now? and where
The Abbess, Marmion, and Clare?—
Bold Douglas! to Tantallon fair
They journey in thy charge:
Lord Marmion rode on his right hand,
The Palmer still was with the band;
Angus, like Lindesay, did command,
That none should roam at large.
But in that Palmer's altered mien
A wondrous change might now be seen;
Freely he spoke of war,
Of marvels wrought by single hand,
When lifted for a native land;
And still looked high, as if he planned
Some desperate deed afar.
His courser would he feed and stroke,
And, tucking up his sable frocke,
Would first his mettle bold provoke,
Then soothe, or quell his pride.
Old Hubert said, that never one
He saw, except Lord Marmion,
A steed so fairly ride.

XXVIII.

Some half-hour's march behind, there came
By Eustace governed fair,
A troop escorting Hilda's Dame,
With all her nuns, and Clare.
No audience had Lord Marmion sought;
Ever he feared to aggravate
Clara de Clare's suspicious hate;
And safer 'twas, he thought,
To wait till, from the nuns removed,
The influence of kinsmen loved,
And suit by Henry's self approved,
Her slow consent had wrought.
His was no flickering flame, that dies
Unless when fanned by looks and sighs,
And lighted oft at lady's eye;
He longed to stretch his wide command
O'er luckless Clara's ample land:
Besides, when Wilton with him vied,
Although the pang of humbled pride
The place of jealousy supplied,
Yet conquest, by that meanness won,
He almost loathed to think upon,
Led him, at times, to hate the cause,
Which made him burst through honour's laws.

If e'er he loved, 'twas her alone,
Who died within that vault of stone.

XXIX.

And now, when close at hand they saw
North-Berwick's town and lofty Law,
Fitz-Eustace bade them pause a while
Before a venerable pile.*
Whose turrets viewed, afar,
The lofty Bass, the Lambie Isle,
The ocean's peace or war.
At tolling of a bell, forth came
The convent's venerable Dame,
And prayed Saint Hilda's Abbess rest
With her, a loved and honoured guest,
Till Douglas should a barque prepare,
To waft her back to Whitby fair.
Glad was the Abbess, you may guess,
And thanked the Scottish Prioress;
And tedious were to tell, I ween,
The courteous speech that passed between.
O'erjoyed the nuns their palfreys leave:
But when fair Clara did intend,
Like them, from horseback to descend,
Fitz-Eustace said,—"I grieve,
Fair lady, grieve e'en from my heart,
Such gentle company to part.—
Think not discourtesy,
But lords' commands must be obeyed;
And Marmion and the Douglas said,
That you must wend with me.
Lord Marmion hath a letter broad,
Which to the Scottish Earl he showed,
Commanding, that, beneath his care,
Without delay, you shall repair,
To your good kinsman, Lord Fitz-Clare."

XXX.

The startled Abbess loud exclaimed:
But she, at whom the blow was aimed,
Grew pale as death, and cold as lead,—
She deemed she heard her death-doom read.
"Cheer thee, my child!" the Abbess said,
"They dare not tear thee from my hand,
To ride along with armèd band."—
"Nay, holy mother, nay,"
Fitz-Eustace said, "the lovely Clare
Will be in Lady Angus' care,
In Scotland while we stay;

* This was a convent of Cistercian nuns near North-Berwick, of which there are still some remains. It was founded by Duncan, earl of Fife, in 1216.

And, when we move, an easy ride,
Will bring us to the English side,
Female attendance to provide
Befitting Gloster's heir;
Nor thinks, nor dreams, my noble lord,
By slightest look, or act, or word,
To harass Lady Clare.
Her faithful guardian he will be,
Nor sue for slightest courtesy
That e'en to stranger falls,
Till he shall place her, safe and free,
Within her kinsman's halls."—
He spoke, and blushed with earnest grace;
His faith was painted on his face,
And Clare's worst fear relieved.
The Lady Abbess loud exclaimed
On Henry, and the Douglas blamed,
Entreated, threatened, grieved;
To martyr, saint, and prophet prayed,
Against Lord Marmion inveighed,
And called the Prioress to aid,
To curse with candle, bell, and book.—
Her head the grave Cistercian shook:
"The Douglas and the King," she said,
"In their commands will be obeyed;
Grieve not, nor dream that harm can fall
The maiden in Tantallon hall."

XXXI.

The Abbess, seeing strife was vain,
Assumed her wonted state again,—
For much of state she had,—
Composed her veil, and raised her head,
And—"Bid," in solemn voice she said,
"Thy master, bold and bad,
The records of his house turn o'er,
And, when he shall there written see,
That one of his own ancestry
Drove the Monks forth of Coventry,*
Bid him his fate explore!
Prancing in pride of earthly trust,
His charger hurled him to the dust,
And, by a base plebeian thrust,
He died his band before.
God judge 'twixt Marmion and me;
He is a chief of high degree,
And I a poor recluse;
Yet oft, in holy writ, we see
Even such weak minister as me
May the oppressor bruise:

* This relates to the catastrophe of a real Robert de Marmion in the reign of King Stephen. The story is told by William of Newbury.

For thus, inspired, did Judith slay
The mighty in his sin,
And Jael thus, and Deborah,"—
Here hasty Blount broke in:
"Fitz-Eustace, we must march our band;
St. Anton' fire thee! wilt thou stand
All day, with bonnet in thy hand,
To hear the Ladye preach?
By this good light! if thus we stay
Lord Marmion, for our fond delay,
Will sharper sermon teach.
Come, don thy cap, and mount thy horse;
The Dame must patience take perforce."

XXXII.

"Submit we then to force," said Clare;
"But let this barbarous lord despair
His purposed aim to win;
Let him take living, land, and life;
But to be Marmion's wedded wife
In me were deadly sin:
And if it be the king's decree,
That I must find no sanctuary,
Where even an homicide might come,
And safely rest his head,
Though at its open portals stood,
Thirsting to pour forth blood for blood,
The kinsmen of the dead;
Yet one asylum is my own,
Against the dreaded hour;
A low, a silent, and a lone,
Where kings have little power.
One victim is before me there.—
Mother, your blessing, and in prayer
Remember your unhappy Clare!"
Loud weeps the Abbess, and bestows
Kind blessings many a one;
Weeping and wailing loud arose
Round patient Clare, the clamorous woes
Of every simple nun.
His eyes the gentle Eustace dried,
And scarce rude Blount the sight could bide.
Then took the squire her rein,
And gently led away her steed,
And, by each courteous word and deed,
To cheer her strove in vain.

XXXIII.

But scant three miles the band had rode,
When o'er a height they passed,
And, sudden, close before them showed
His towers, Tantallon vast:

Broad, massive, high, and stretching far,
And held impregnable in war.
On a projecting rock they rose,
And round three sides the ocean flows;
The fourth did battled walls enclose,
And double mound and fosse
By narrow drawbridge, outworks strong,
Through studded gates, an entrance long,
To the main court they cross.*
It was a wide and stately square;
Around were lodgings, fit and fair,
And towers of various form,
Which on the court projected far,
And broke its lines quadrangular.
Here was square keep, there turret high,
Or pinnacle that sought the sky,
Whence oft the Warder could descry
The gathering ocean storm.

XXXIV.

Here did they rest.—The princely care
Of Douglas, why should I declare,
Or say they met reception fair?
Or why the tidings say,
Which, varying, to Tantallon came,
By hurrying posts, or fleeter fame,
With every varying day?
And, first, they heard King James had won
Ettall, and Wark, and Ford; and then
That Norham castle strong was ta'en.
At that sore marvelled Marmion;—
And Douglas hoped his monarch's hand
Would soon subdue Northumberland:
But whispered news there came,
That, while his host inactive lay,
And melted by degrees away,
King James was dallying off the day
With Heron's wily dame.—
Such acts to chronicles I yield;
Go seek them there, and see:
Mine is a tale of Flodden Field,
And not a history.—
At length, they heard the Scottish host
On that high ridge had made their post,
Which frowns o'er Millfield Plain;
And that brave Surrey many a band
Had gathered in the Southern land,
And marched into Northumberland,
And camp at Wooler ta'en.
Marmion, like charger in the stall,
That hears without the trumpet-call,

* First edition, "pass."

Began to chafe, and swear:—
"A sorry thing to hide my head
In castle, like a fearful maid,
When such a field is near!
Needs must I see this battle-day:
Death to my fame, if such a fray
Were fought, and Marmion away!
The Douglas, too, I wot not why,
Hath 'bated of his courtesy:
No longer in his halls I'll stay."—
Then bade his band, they should array
For march against the dawning day.

INTRODUCTION TO CANTO SIXTH.

TO RICHARD HEBER, ESQ.

Mertoun House, Christmas.*

HEAP on more wood!—the wind is chill;
But let it whistle as it will,
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.
Each age has deemed the new-born year
The fittest time for festal cheer:
Even heathen yet, the savage Dane
At Iol† more deep the mead did drain;
High on the beach his galleys drew,
And feasted all his pirate crew;
Then in his low and pine-built hall,
Where shields and axes decked the wall,
They gorged upon the half-dressed steer;
Caroused in seas of sable beer;
While round, in brutal jest, were thrown
The half-gnawed rib, and marrow-bone:
Or listened all, in grim delight,
While scalds‡ yelled out the joys of fight.
Then forth, in frenzy, would they hie,
While wildly loose their red locks fly;
And dancing round the blazing pile,
They make such barbarous mirth the while,
As best might to the mind recall
The boisterous joys of Odin's hall.

* On the Tweed, a little below Dryburgh Abbey.

† The Iol of the heathen Danes (a word still applied to Christmas in Scotland) was solemnized with great festivity.—See Mallet's *Northern Antiquities.*

‡ A name given by the northern nations to their bards.

And well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all his hospitable train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honour to the holy night:
On Christmas eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas eve the mass was sung;*
That only night in all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry-men go,
To gather in the misletoe.
Then opened wide the baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And Ceremony doffed his pride.
The heir, with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose;
The lord, underogating, share
The vulgar game of "post and pair."†
All hailed, with uncontrolled delight,
And general voice, the happy night,
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.

The fire, with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall-table's oaken face,
Scrubbed till it shone the day to grace,
Bore then upon its massive board
No mark to part the squire and lord.
Then was brought in the lusty brawn,
By old blue-coated serving-man;
Then the grim boar's-head frowned on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary.
Well can the green-garbed ranger tell,
How, when, and where, the monster fell;
What dogs before his death he tore,
And all the baiting of the boar.
The wassel round in good brown bowls,
Garnished with ribbons, blithely trowls.‡
There the huge surloin reeked; hard by
Plum-porridge stood, and Christmas pie;
Nor failed old Scotland to produce,
At such high-tide, her savoury goose.

* In Roman Catholic countries mass is never said at night, excepting on Christmas eve.

† An old game at cards.

‡ First edition,—

"While round the merry wassel bowl,
Garnished with ribbons, blithe did trowl."

Then came the merry masquers in,
And carols roared with blithesome din;
If unmelodious was the song,
It was a hearty note, and strong.
Who lists may in their mumming see
Traces of ancient mystery;*
White shirts supplied the masquerade,
And smutted cheeks the visors made;
But, O! what masquers richly dight
Can boast of bosoms half so light!
England was merry England, when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale;
'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale;
A Christmas gambol oft could cheer
The poor man's heart through half the year.

Still linger in our northern clime,
Some remnants of the good old time;
And still, within our valleys here,
We hold the kindred title dear,
Even when perchance its far-fetched claim
To Southron ear sounds empty name;
For course of blood our proverbs deem,
Is warmer than the mountain stream.†
And thus, my Christmas still I hold
Where my great-grandsire came of old;
With amber beard, and flaxen hair,
And reverend apostolic air—
The feast and holy-tide to share,
And mix sobriety with wine,
And honest mirth with thoughts divine.
Small thought was his, in after-time
E'er to be hitched into a rhyme.
The simple sire could only boast,
That he was loyal to his cost;
The banished race of kings revered,
And lost his land,—but kept his beard.

In these dear halls, where welcome kind,
Is with fair liberty combined;
Where cordial friendship gives the hand,
And flies constraint the magic wand
Of the fair dame that rules the land,

*It seems certain, that the mummers of England, who (in Northumberland at least) used to go about in disguise to the neighbouring houses, bearing the then useless ploughshare and the *Guisards* of Scotland, present, in some indistinct degree, a shadow of the old mysteries, which were the origin of the English drama.

† "Blood is warmer than water,"—a proverb meant to vindicate our family predilections.

Little we heed the tempest drear,
While music, mirth, and social cheer,
Speed on their wings the passing year.
And Mertoun's halls are fair e'en now,
When not a leaf is on the bough.
Tweed loves them well, and turns again,
As loath to leave the sweet domain;
And holds his mirror to her face,
And clips her with a close embrace:—
Gladly as he, we seek the dome,
And as reluctant turn us home.

How just, that, at this time of glee,
My thoughts should, Heber, turn to thee!
For many a merry hour we've known,
And heard the chimes of midnight's tone.
Cease, then, my friend! a moment cease,
And leave these classic tomes in peace!
Of Roman and of Grecian lore,
Sure mortal brain can hold no more.
These ancients, as Noll Bluff might say,
Were "pretty fellows in their day,"*
But time and tide o'er all prevail—
On Christmas eve a Christmas tale—
Of wonder and of war—"Profane!
What! leave the lofty Latian strain,
Her stately prose, her verse's charms,
To hear the clash of rusty arms;
In Fairy Land or Limbo lost,
To jostle conjurer and ghost,
Goblin and witch!"—Nay, Heber, dear,
Before you touch my charter, hear.
Though Leyden† aids, alas! no more
My cause with many-languaged lore,
This may I say:—in realms of death
Ulysses meets Alcides' *wrath;*
Æneas, upon Thracia's shore,
The ghost of murdered Polydore;
For omens, we in Livy cross,
At every turn, *locutus Bos.*
As grave and duly speaks that ox,
As if he told the price of stocks;
Or held, in Rome republican,
The place of Common-councilman.

All nations have their omens drear,
Their legions wild of woe and fear.
To Cambria look—the peasant see,

* "Hannibal was a pretty fellow, sir—a very pretty follow in his day."—*Old Bachelor.*

† John Leyden, the poet's friend. He died in India, Aug. 1811.

Bethink him of Glendowerdy,
And shun "the spirit's blasted tree."*
The Highlander, whose red claymore
The battle turned on Maida's shore,
Will, on a Friday morn,† look pale,
If asked to tell a fairy tale:
He fears the vengeful Elfin King,
Who leaves that day his grassy ring;
Invisible to human ken,
He walks among the sons of men.

Didst e'er, dear Heber, pass along
Beneath the towers of Franchémont,
Which, like an eagle's nest in air,
Hang o'er the stream and hamlet fair?—
Deep in their vaults, the peasants say,
A mighty treasure buried lay,
Amassed through rapine, and through wrong,
By the last lord of Franchémont.‡
The iron chest is bolted hard,
A Huntsman sits, its constant guard;
Around his neck his horn is hung,
His hanger in his belt is slung;
Before his feet his bloodhounds lie:
An 'twere not for his gloomy eye,
Whose withering glance no heart can brook,
As true a huntsman doth he look,
As bugle e'er in brake did sound,
Or ever hallooed to a hound.
To chase the fiend, and win the prize,
In that same dungeon ever tries
An aged Necromantic Priest;
It is an hundred years at least,
Since 'twixt them first the strife begun,
And neither yet has lost or won.
And oft the Conjurer's words will make
The stubborn Demon groan and quake;
And oft the bands of iron break,

* See a legendary tale with this title, by George Warrington.

† The *Daoine shi'*, or *Men of Peace*, of the Scottish Highlanders, rather resemble the Scandinavian *Duergar* than the English Fairies. Notwithstanding their name, they are, if not absolutely malevolent, at least peevish, discontented, and apt to do mischief on slight provocation. The belief of their existence is deeply impressed on the Highlanders, who think they are particularly offended with mortals who talk of them, who wear their favourite colour, green, or in any respect interfere with their affairs. This is especially to be avoided on Friday, when, whether as dedicated to Venus, with whom, in Germany, this subterraneous people are held nearly connected, or for a more solemn reason, they are more active and possessed of greater power. Some curious particulars concerning the popular superstitions of the Highlanders, may be found in Dr. Graham's "Picturesque Sketches of Perthshire."

‡ This refers to a striking superstition.

Or bursts one lock, that still amain,
Fast as 'tis opened, shuts again.
That magic strife within the tomb
May last until the day of doom,
Unless the Adept shall learn to tell
The very word that clenched the spell,
When Franch'mont locked the treasure cell.
An hundred years are past and gone,
And scarce three letters has he won.

Such general superstition may
Excuse for old Pitscottie say;
Whose gossip history has given
My song the messenger from heaven,
That warned, in Lithgow, Scotland's King.
Nor less the infernal summoning;
May pass the monk of Durham's tale,*
Whose Demon fought in Gothic mail;
May pardon plead for Fordun grave,
Who told of Gifford's Goblin-Cave.
But why such instances to you,
Who, in an instant, can review
Your treasured hoards of various lore,
And furnish twenty thousand more?
Hoards, not like theirs whose volumes rest
Like treasure in the Franch'mont chest;
While gripple† owners still refuse
To others what they cannot use,
Give them the priest's whole century,
They shall not spell you letters three;
Their pleasure in the book 's the same
The magpie takes in pilfered gem.
Thy volumes, open as thy heart,
Delight, amusement, science, art,
To every ear and eye impart;
Yet who, of all who thus employ them,
Can, like the owner's self, enjoy them?—
But, hark! I hear the distant drum:
The day of Flodden Field is come.—
Adieu, dear Heber! life and health,
And store of literary wealth.

* This and the three following lines are not in the first edition.
† Greedy.

CANTO SIXTH.

THE BATTLE.

I.

While great events were on the gale,
And each hour brought a varying tale,
And the demeanour, changed and cold,
Of Douglas, fretted Marmion bold,
And like the impatient steed of war,
He snuffed the battle from afar;
And hopes were none, that back again,
Herald should come from Terouenne,
Where England's King in leaguer lay,
Before decisive battle-day;—
While these things were, the mournful Clare
Did in the Dame's devotions share:
For the good Countess ceaseless prayed,
To Heaven and Saints, her sons to aid,
And, with short interval, did pass
From prayer to book, from book to mass,
And all in high Baronial pride,
A life both dull and dignified;—
Yet as Lord Marmion nothing pressed
Upon her intervals of rest,
Dejected Clara well could bear
The formal state, the lengthened prayer,
Though dearest to her wounded heart
The hours that she might spend apart.

II.

I said, Tantallon's dizzy steep
Hung o'er the margin of the deep.
Many a rude tower and rampart there
Repelled the insult of the air,
Which, when the tempest vexed the sky,
Half breeze, half spray, came whistling by.
Above the rest, a turret square
Did o'er its Gothic entrance bear,
Of sculpture rude, a stony shield;
The Bloody Heart was in the field,
And in the chief three mullets stood,
The cognizance of Douglas blood.
The turret held a narrow stair,
Which, mounted, gave you access where
A parapet's embattled row
Did seaward round the castle go;
Sometimes in dizzy steps descending,

Sometimes in narrow circuit bending,
Sometimes in platform broad extending,
Its varying circle did combine
Bulwark, and bartizan,* and line,
And bastion, tower, and vantage-coign;
Above the booming ocean leant
The far-projecting battlement;
The billows burst, in ceaseless flow,
Upon the precipice below.
Where'er Tantallon faced the land,
Gate-works, and walls, were strongly manned;
No need upon the sea-girt side;
The steepy rock, and frantic tide,
Approach of human step denied;
And thus these lines, and ramparts rude,
Were left in deepest solitude.

III.

And, for they were so lonely, Clare
Would to these battlements repair,
And muse upon her sorrows there,
And list the sea-bird's cry;
Or slow, like noon-tide ghost, would glide
Along the dark-grey bulwarks' side,
And ever on the heaving tide
Look down with weary eye.
Oft did the cliff, and swelling main,
Recall the thoughts of Whitby's fane,—
A home she ne'er might see again;
For she had laid adown,
So Douglas bade, the hood and veil,
And frontlet of the cloister pale,
And Benedictine gown:
It were unseemly sight, he said,
A novice out of convent shade.—
Now her bright locks, with sunny glow
Again adorned her brow of snow;
Her mantle rich, whose borders, round,
A deep and fretted broidery bound,
In golden foldings sought the ground;
Of holy ornament, alone
Remained a cross with ruby stone;
And often did she look
On that which in her hand she bore
With velvet bound, and broidered o'er,
Her breviary book.
In such a place, so lone, so grim,
At dawning pale, or twilight dim,
It fearful would have been,
To meet a form so richly dressed,

* See note to "Lay of the Last Minstrel," p. 46.

With book in hand, and cross on breast,
And such a woeful mien.
Fitz-Eustace, loitering with his bow,
To practise on the gull and crow,
Saw her, at distance, gliding slow,
And did by Mary swear,—
Some love-lorn Fay she might have been,
Or, in romance, some spell-bound queen;
For ne'er, in work-day world, was seen
A form so witching fair.

IV.

Once walking thus, at evening tide,
It chanced a gliding sail she spied,
And, sighing, thought—"The Abbess there
Perchance, does to her home repair;
Her peaceful rule, where Duty, free,
Walks hand in hand with Charity;
Where oft Devotion's trancèd glow
Can such a glimpse of heaven bestow,
That the enraptured sisters see
High vision, and deep mystery;
The very form of Hilda fair,*
Hovering upon the sunny air,
And smiling on her votaries' prayer.
O! wherefore to my duller eye,
Did still the Saint her form deny?
Was it, that, seared by sinful scorn,
My heart could neither melt nor burn?
Or lie my warm affections low,
With him that taught them first to glow?
Yet, gentle Abbess, well I knew,
To pay thy kindness grateful due,
And well could brook the mild command
That ruled thy simple maiden band.—
How different now! condemned to bide
My doom from this dark tyrant's pride.—
But Marmion has to learn, ere long,
That constant mind, and hate of wrong,
Descended to a feeble girl,
From Red De Clare, stout Gloster's Earl:
Of such a stem, a sapling weak,
He ne'er shall bend, although he break.

V.

"But see!—what makes this armour here?"
For in her path there lay
Targe, corslet, helm;—she viewed them near.—
"The breastplate pierced!—Ay, much I fear,
Weak fence wert thou 'gainst foeman's spear,

* The Lady Hilda was long believed to render herself visible, on some occasions, in the abbey of Steanshalk, or Whitby.

That hath made fatal entrance here,
As these dark blood-gouts say.—
Thus Wilton!—Oh! not corslet's ward,
Not truth, as diamond pure and hard,
Could be thy manly bosom's guard,
On yon disastrous day!"—
She raised her eyes in mournful mood,—
WILTON himself before her stood!
It might have seemed his passing ghost,
For every youthful grace was lost:
And joy unwonted, and surprise,
Give their strange wildness to his eyes.—
Expect not, noble dames and lords,
That I can tell such scene in words:
What skilful limner e'er would choose
To paint the rainbow's varying hues,
Unless to mortal it were given
To dip his brush in dyes of heaven?
Far less can my weak line declare
Each changing passion's shade;
Brightening to rapture from despair,
Sorrow, surprise, and pity there,
And joy, with her angelic air,
And hope, that paints the future fair,
Their varying hues displayed:
Each o'er its rival's ground extending,
Alternate conquering, shifting, blending,
Till all, fatigued, the conflict yield,
And mighty Love retains the field.
Shortly I tell what then he said,
By many a tender word delayed,
And modest blush, and bursting sigh,
And question kind, and fond reply.

VI.

DE WILTON'S HISTORY.

"Forget we that disastrous day,
When senseless in the lists I lay.
Thence dragged,—but how I cannot know,
For sense and recollection fled,—
I found me on a pallet low,
Within my ancient beadsman's shed.
Austin,—remember'st thou, my Clare,
How thou didst blush, when the old man,
When first our infant love began,
Said we would make a matchless pair?—
Menials, and friends, and kinsmen fled
From the degraded traitor's bed,—
He only held my burning head,
And tended me for many a day,
While wounds and fever held their sway.

But far more needful was his care,
When sense returned to wake despair;
For I did tear the closing wound,
And dash me frantic on the ground,
If e'er I heard the name of Clare.
At length, to calmer reason brought,
Much by his kind attendance wrought,
With him I left my native strand,
And, in a palmer's weeds arrayed,
My hated name and form to shade,
I journeyed many a land;
No more a lord of rank and birth,
But mingled with the dregs of earth.
Oft Austin for my reason feared,
When I would sit, and deeply brood
On dark revenge and deeds of blood,
Or wild mad schemes upreared.
My friend at length fell sick, and said,
God would remove him soon;
And while upon his dying bed,
He begged of me a boon—
If e'er my deadliest enemy
Beneath my brand should conquered lie,
Even then my mercy should awake,
And spare his life for Austin's sake.

VII.

"Still restless as a second Cain,
To Scotland next my route was ta'en.
Full well the paths I knew;
Fame of my fate made various sound,
That death in pilgrimage I found,
That I had perished of my wound,—
None cared which tale was true:
And living eye could never guess
De Wilton in his Palmer's dress;
For now that sable slough* is shed,
And trimmed my shaggy beard and head,
I scarcely know me in the glass.
A chance most wondrous did provide,
That I should be that Baron's guide—
I will not name his name!—
Vengeance to God alone belongs;
But, when I think on all my wrongs,
My blood is liquid flame!
And ne'er the time shall I forget,
When, in a Scottish hostel set,
Dark looks we did exchange:
What were his thoughts I cannot tell,
But in my bosom mustered Hell
Its plans of dark revenge.

* Husk.

VIII.

"A word of vulgar augury,
That broke from me, I scarce knew why,
Brought on a village tale;
Which wrought upon his moody sprite,
And sent him armèd forth by night.
I borrowed steed and mail,
And weapons, from his sleeping band;
And, passing from a postern door,
We met, and 'countered, hand to hand,—
He fell on Gifford-moor.
For the death-stroke my brand I drew,
(O then my helmèd head he knew,
The Palmer's cowl was gone,)
Then had three inches of my blade
The heavy debt of vengeance paid,—
My hand the thought of Austin stayed;
I left him there alone.—
O good old man! even from the grave,
Thy spirit could thy master save:
If I had slain my foeman, ne'er
Had Whitby's Abbess, in her fear,
Given to my hand this packet dear,
Of power to clear my injured fame,
And vindicate De Wilton's name.—
Perchance you heard the Abbess tell
Of the strange pageantry of Hell,
That broke our secret speech—
It rose from the infernal shade,
Or featly* was some juggle played,
A tale of peace to teach.
Appeal to Heaven I judged was best,
When my name came among the rest.

IX.

"Now here, within Tantallon Hold,
To Douglas late my tale I told,
To whom my house was known of old.
Won by my proofs, his falchion bright
This eve anew shall dub me knight.
These were the arms that once did turn
The tide of fight on Otterburne,†
And Harry Hotspur forced to yield,
When the Dead Douglas won the field.
These Angus gave—his armourer's care,
Ere morn, shall every breach repair;
For nought, he said, was in his halls,
But ancient armour on the walls,
And aged chargers in the stalls,

* Neatly.
† See the ballad of Otterburne in the "Border Minstrelsy."

And women, priests, and grey-haired men;
The rest were all in Twisel-glen.*
And now I watch my armour here,
By law of arms, till midnight's near;
Then, once again a belted knight,
Seek Surrey's camp with dawn of light.

X.

"There soon again we meet, my Clare!
This Baron means to guide thee there.
Douglas reveres his king's command,
Else would he take thee from his band.
And there thy kinsman, Surrey, too,
Will give De Wilton justice due.
Now meeter far for martial broil,
Firmer my limbs, and strung by toil,
Once more"——"O, Wilton! must we then
Risk new-found happiness again,
Trust fate of arms once more?
And is there not a humble glen,
Where we, content and poor,
Might build a cottage in the shade,
A shepherd thou, and I to aid
Thy task on dale and moor?—
That reddening brow!—too well I know
Not even thy Clare can peace bestow,
While falsehood stains thy name:
Go then to fight! Clare bids thee go!
Clare can a warrior's feelings know,
And weep a warrior's shame;
Can Red Earl Gilbert's spirit feel,
Buckle the spurs upon thy heel,
And belt thee with thy brand of steel,
And send thee forth to fame!"—

XI.

That night, upon the rocks and bay,
The midnight moonbeam slumbering lay,
And poured its silver light, and pure,
Through loop-hole, and through embrazure,
Upon Tantallon tower and hall;
But chief where arched windows wide
Illuminate the chapel's pride,
The sober glances fall.
Much was there need; though, seamed with scars
Two veterans of the Douglas' wars,
Though two grey priests were there,
And each a blazing torch held high,
You could not by their blaze descry
The chapel's carving fair.

* Where James encamped before taking post on Flodden.

Amid that dim and smoky light,
Chequering the silvery moonshine bright,
A bishop* by the altar stood,
A noble lord of Douglas blood,
With mitre sheen, and rocquet† white;
Yet showed his meek and thoughtful eye
But little pride of prelacy:
More pleased that, in a barbarous age,
He gave rude Scotland Virgil's page,
Than that beneath his rule he held
The bishopric of fair Dunkeld.
Beside him ancient Angus stood,
Doffed his furred gown, and sable hood;
O'er his huge form, and visage pale,
He wore a cap and shirt of mail;
And leaned his large and wrinkled hand
Upon the huge and sweeping brand,
Which wont, of yore, in battle-fray,
His foeman's limbs to shred away,
As wood-knife lops the sapling spray.‡
He seemed, as from the tombs around
Rising at judgment-day,
Some giant Douglas may be found
In all his old array;
So pale his face, so huge his limb,
So old his arms, his look so grim.

XII.

Then at the altar Wilton kneels,
And Clare the spurs bound on his heels;
And think what next he must have felt,
At buckling of the falchion belt;
And judge how Clara changed her hue,
While fastening to her lover's side
A friend, which, though in danger tried,
He once had found untrue!
Then Douglas struck him with his blade:
"Saint Michael and Saint Andrew aid,
I dub thee knight,
Arise Sir Ralph, De Wilton's heir!
For king, for church, for lady fair,
See that thou fight."—
And Bishop Gawain, as he rose,
Said,—"Wilton! grieve not for thy woes,
Disgrace, and trouble,

* The well-known Gawain Douglas, bishop of Dunkeld, son of Archibald Bell-the-Cat, earl of Angus. He was author of a Scottish metrical version of the Æneid, and of many other poetical pieces of great merit. He had not at this period attained the mitre.

† A cloak without a cape.

‡ Angus had strength and personal activity corresponding to his courage.

For He, who honour best bestows,
May give thee double."—
De Wilton sobbed, for sob he must—
"Where'er I meet a Douglas, trust
That Douglas is my brother!"—
"Nay, nay," old Angus said, "not so;
To Surrey's camp thou now must go,
Thy wrongs no longer smother.
I have two sons in yonder field;
And, if thou meet'st them under shield,
Upon them bravely—do thy worst;
And foul fall him that blenches first!"

XIII.

Not far advanced was morning day,
When Marmion did his troop array
To Surrey's camp to ride;
He had safe-conduct for his band,
Beneath the royal seal and hand,
And Douglas gave a guide:
The ancient Earl, with stately grace,
Would Clara on her palfrey place,
And whispered, in an under-tone,
"Let the hawk stoop, his prey is flown."
The train from out the castle drew;
But Marmion stopped to bid adieu:—
"Though something I might plain," he said,
"Of cold respect to stranger guest,
Sent hither by your king's behest,
While in Tantallon's towers I stayed;
Part we in friendship from your land,
And, noble Earl, receive my hand."—
But Douglas round him drew his cloak,
Folded his arms, and thus he spoke:—
"My manors, halls, and bowers, shall still
Be open to my sovereign's will,
To each one whom he lists, howe'er
Unmeet to be the owner's peer,
My castles are my king's alone,
From turret to foundation-stone—
The hand of Douglas is his own;
And never shall in friendly grasp
The hand of such as Marmion clasp."—

XIV.

Burned Marmion's swarthy cheek like fire,
And shook his very frame for ire,
And—"This to me!" he said,—
"An 'twere not for thy hoary beard,
Such hand as Marmion's had not spared
To cleave the Douglas' head!
And, first, I tell thee, haughty Peer,
He, who does England's message here,

Although the meanest in her state,
May well, proud Angus, be thy mate:
And, Douglas, more I tell thee here,
Even in thy pitch of pride,
Here in thy Hold, thy vassals near,
(Nay, never look upon your lord,
And lay your hands upon your sword,)
I tell thee, thou'rt defied!
And if thou saidst, I am not peer
To any lord in Scotland here,
Lowland or Highland, far or near,
Lord Angus, thou hast lied!"—
On the Earl's cheek the flush of rage
O'ercame the ashen hue of age:
Fierce he broke forth:—"And darest thou then
To beard the lion in his den,
The Douglas in his hall?
And hopest thou hence unscathed to go?—
No, by Saint Bryde of Bothwell, no!—
Up drawbridge, grooms—what, Warder, ho!
Let the portcullis fall."*—
Lord Marmion turned,—well was his need,
And dashed the rowels in his steed,
Like arrow through the archway sprung,
The ponderous gate behind him rung:
To pass there was such scanty room,
The bars, descending, razed his plume.

XV.

The steed along the drawbridge flies,
Just as it trembled on the rise:
Not lighter does the swallow skim
Along the smooth lake's level brim:
And when Lord Marmion reached his band,
He halts, and turns with clenchèd hand,
And shout of loud defiance pours,
And shook his gauntlet at the towers.
"Horse! horse!" the Douglas cried, "and chase!"
But soon he reined his fury's pace:
"A royal messenger he came,
Though most unworthy of the name.—
A letter forged!† Saint Jude to speed!
Did ever knight so foul a deed!
At first in heart it liked me ill,
When the King praised his clerkly skill.
Thanks to Saint Bothan, son of mine,
Save Gawain, ne'er could pen a line:

*This ebullition of violence in the potent earl of Angus is not without examples in the real history of the house of Douglas.

†Such crimes were by no means uncommon in and about the period in which the scene is laid.

So swore I, and I swear it still,
Let my boy-bishop fret his fill.—
Saint Mary mend my fiery mood!
Old age ne'er cools the Douglas blood,
I thought to slay him where he stood.—
'Tis pity of him, too," he cried;
"Bold can he speak, and fairly ride:
I warrant him a warrior tried."—
With this his mandate he recalls,
And slowly seeks his castle halls.

XVI.

The day in Marmion's journey wore;
Yet, ere his passion's gust was o'er,
They crossed the heights of Stanrigg-moor.
His troop more closely there he scanned,
And missed the Palmer from the band.—
"Palmer or not," young Blount did say,
"He parted at the peep of day:
Good sooth, it was in strange array."
"In what array?" said Marmion, quick.
"My lord, I ill can spell the trick;
But all night long, with clink and bang,
Close to my couch did hammers clang;
At dawn the falling drawbridge rang,
And from a loophole while I peep,
Old Bell-the-Cat came from the Keep,
Wrapped in a gown of sables fair,
As fearful as the morning air;
Beneath, when that was blown aside,
A rusty shirt of mail I spied,
By Archibald won in bloody work,
Against the Saracen and Turk:
Last night it hung not in the hall;
I thought some marvel would befall.
And next I saw them saddled lead
Old Cheviot forth, the Earl's best steed;
A matchless horse, though something old,
Prompt to his paces, cool and bold.
I heard the Sheriff Sholto say,
The Earl did much the Master* pray
To use him on the battle-day;
But he preferred"—"Nay, Henry, cease!
Thou sworn horse-courser, hold thy peace.—
Eustace, thou bear'st a brain—I pray,
What did Blount see at break of day?"—

XVII.

In brief, my lord, we both descried
(For I then stood by Henry's side)

* His eldest son, the Master of Angus.

The Palmer mount and outwards ride,
Upon the Earl's own favourite steed;
All sheathed he was in armour bright,
And much resembled that same knight
Subdued by you in Cotswold fight;
Lord Angus wished him speed."—
The instant that Fitz-Eustace spoke,
A sudden light on Marmion broke:—
"Ah! dastard fool, to reason lost!"
He muttered: "'Twas not fay nor ghost
I met upon the moonlight wold,
But living man of earthly mould.—
O dotage blind and gross!
Had I but fought as wont, one thrust
Had laid De Wilton in the dust,
My path no more to cross.—
How stand we now?—he told his tale
To Douglas; and with some avail;
'Twas therefore gloomed his rugged brow.—
Will Surrey dare to entertain,
'Gainst Marmion, charge disproved and vain?
Small risk of that I trow.—
Yet Clare's sharp questions must I shun;
Must separate Constance from the Nun—
O what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive!—
A Palmer too!—no wonder why
I felt rebuked beneath his eye:
I might have known there was but one,
Whose look could quell Lord Marmion."—

XVIII.

Stung with these thoughts, he urged to speed
His troop, and reached, at eve, the Tweed,
Where Lennel's* convent closed their march;
(There now is left but one frail arch,
Yet mourn thou not its cells;
Our time a fair exchange has made;
Hard by, in hospitable shade,
A reverend pilgrim dwells,
Well worth the whole Bernardine brood,
That e'er wore sandal, frock, or hood.)
Yet did Saint Bernard's Abbot there
Give Marmion entertainment fair,
And lodging for his train, and Clare.
Next morn the Baron climbed the tower,
To view afar the Scottish power,
Encamped on Flodden edge:

* A Cistercian house of religion, now almost demolished. It is situated near Coldstream, almost opposite to Cornhill, and consequently very near to Flodden Field.

The white pavilions made a show,
Like remnants of the winter snow,
Along the dusky ridge.
Long Marmion looked:—at length his eye
Unusual movement might descry,
Amid the shifting lines:
The Scottish host drawn out appears,
For, flashing on the edge of spears
The eastern sunbeam shines.
Their front now deepening, now extending;
Their flank inclining, wheeling, bending,
Now drawing back, and now descending,
The skilful Marmion well could know,
They watched the motions of some foe,
Who traversed on the plain below.

XIX.

E'en so it was:—from Flodden ridge
The Scots beheld the English host
Leave Barmore-wood, their evening post,
And heedful watched them as they crossed
The Till by Twisel-bridge.*
High sight it is, and haughty, while
They dive into the deep defile;
Beneath the caverned cliff they fall,
Beneath the castle's airy wall.
By rock, by oak, by hawthorn-tree,
Troop after troop are disappearing;
Troop after troop their banners rearing,
Upon the eastern bank you see.
Still pouring down the rocky den,
Where flows the sullen Till,
And rising from the dim-wood glen,

*On the evening previous to the memorable battle of Flodden, Surrey's head-quarters were at Barmoor-wood, and King James held an inaccessible position on the ridge of Flodden-hill, one of the last and lowest eminences detached from the ridge of Cheviot. The Till, a deep and slow river, winded between the armies. On the morning of the 9th September, 1513, Surrey marched in a north-westerly direction, and turning eastward, crossed the Till, with his van and artillery, at Twisel-bridge, nigh where that river joins the Tweed, his rear-guard column passing about a mile higher, by a ford. This movement had the double effect of placing his army between King James and his supplies from Scotland, and of striking the Scottish monarch with surprise, as he seems to have relied on the depth of the river in his front. But as the passage, both over the bridge and through the ford, was difficult and slow, it seems possible that the English might have been attacked to great advantage while struggling with these natural obstacles. I know not if we are to impute James's forbearance to want of military skill, or to the romantic declaration which Pitscottie puts in his mouth, "that he was determined to have his enemies before him on a plain field," and therefore would suffer no interruption to be given, even by artillery, to their passing the river.

Standards on standards, men on men,
In slow succession still,
And sweeping* o'er the Gothic arch,
And pressing on, in ceaseless march,
To gain the opposing hill.
That morn, to many a trumpet-clang,
Twisel! thy rock's deep echo rang;
And many a chief of birth and rank,
Saint Helen! at thy fountain drank.
Thy hawthorn glade, which now we see
In spring-tide bloom so lavishly,
Had then from many an axe its doom,
To give the marching columns room.

XX.

And why stands Scotland idly now,
Dark Flodden! on thy airy brow,
Since England gains the pass the while,
And struggles through the deep defile?
What checks the fiery soul of James?
Why sits that champion of the dames
Inactive on his steed,
And sees, between him and his land,
Between him and Tweed's southern strand,
His host Lord Surrey lead?
What 'vails the vain knight-errant's brand?—
O, Douglas, for thy leading wand!
Fierce Randolph, for thy speed!
O for one hour of Wallace wight,
Or well-skilled Bruce, to rule the fight,
And cry—"Saint Andrew and our right!"
Another sight had seen that morn,
From Fate's dark book a leaf been torn,
And Flodden had been Bannock-bourne!—
The precious hour has passed in vain,
And England's host has gained the plain;
Wheeling their march, and circling still,
Around the base of Flodden-hill.

XXI.

Ere yet the bands met Marmion's eye,
Fitz-Eustace shouted loud and high,—
"Hark! hark! my lord, an English drum!
And see ascending squadrons come
Between Tweed's river and the hill,
Foot, horse, and cannon:—hap what hap,
My basnet† to a 'prentice cap,
Lord Surrey's o'er the Till!—
Yet more! yet more!—how fair arrayed
They file from out the hawthorn shade,
And sweep so gallant by!

* First edition, "bending."

† A light helmet.

With all their banners bravely spread,
And all their armour flashing high,
Saint George might waken from the dead,
To see fair England's standards fly."—
"Stint in thy prate," quoth Blount; "thou'dst best,
And listen to our lord's behest."—
With kindling brow Lord Marmion said,—
"This instant be our band arrayed;
The river must be quickly crossed,
That we may join Lord Surrey's host.
If fight King James,—as well I trust,
That fight he will, and fight he must,—
The Lady Clare behind our lines
Shall tarry, while the battle joins."—

XXII.

Himself he swift on horseback threw,
Scarce to the Abbot bade adieu:
Far less would listen to his prayer,
To leave behind the helpless Clare.
Down to the Tweed his band he drew,
And muttered, as the flood they view,
"The pheasant in the falcon's claw,
He scarce will yield to please a daw;
Lord Angus may the Abbot awe,
So Clare shall bide with me."
Then on that dangerous ford, and deep,
Where to the Tweed Leat's eddies creep,
He ventured desperately;
And not a moment will he bide,
Till squire, or groom, before him ride;
Headmost of all he stems the tide,
And stems it gallantly.
Eustace held Clare upon her horse,
Old Hubert led her rein,
Stoutly they braved the current's course,
And, though far downward driven per force,
The southern bank they gain;
Behind them, straggling, came to shore,
As best they might, the train:
Each o'er his head his yew-bow bore,
A caution not in vain;
Deep need that day that every string,
By wet unharmed, should sharply ring.
A moment then Lord Marmion stayed,
And breathed his steed, his men arrayed,
Then forward moved his band.
Until, Lord Surrey's rear-guard won,
He halted by a cross of stone,
That, on a hillock standing lone,
Did all the field command.

XXIII.

Hence might they see the full array
Of either host, for deadly fray;*
Their marshalled lines stretched east and west.
And fronted north and south,
And distant salutation passed
From the loud cannon mouth;
Not in the close successive rattle,
That breathes the voice of modern battle,
But slow and far between.—
The hillock gained. Lord Marmion stayed:
"Here, by this cross," he gently said,
"You well may view the scene.
Here shalt thou tarry, lovely Clare:
O! think of Marmion in thy prayer.—
Thou wilt not?—well,—no less my care
Shall, watchful, for thy weal prepare.—
You, Blount and Eustace, are her guard,
With ten picked archers of my train;
With England if the day go hard,
To Berwick speed amain.—
But, if we conquer, cruel maid!
My spoils shall at your feet be laid,
When here we meet again."—
He waited not for answer there,
And would not mark the maid's despair,
Nor heed the discontented look
From either squire; but spurred amain,
And, dashing through the battle-plain,
His way to Surrey took.

XXIV.

"——The good Lord Marmion, by my life
Welcome to danger's hour!—
Short greeting serves in time of strife:—
Thus have I ranged my power:
Myself will rule this central host,
Stout Stanley fronts their right,
My sons command the vaward post,
With Brian Tunstall,† stainless knight;
Lord Dacre, with his horsemen light,
Shall be in rear-ward of the fight,
And succour those that need it most.

* The reader will find a full account of the battle of Flodden in the works of various historians.

† Sir Brian Tunstall, called, in the romantic language of the time, Tunstall the Undefiled, was one of the few Englishmen of rank slain at Flodden. Tunstall perhaps derived his epithet of *undefiled* from his white armour and banner, the latter bearing a white cock about to crow, as well as from his unstained loyalty and knightly faith. His place of residence was Thurland Castle.

Now, gallant Marmion, well I know,
Would gladly to the vanguard go:
Edmund, the Admiral, Tunstall there,
With thee their charge will blithely share;
There fight thine own retainers too,
Beneath De Burg, thy steward true."—
"Thanks, noble Surrey!" Marmion said,
Nor further greeting there he paid;
But, parting like a thunderbolt,
First in the vanguard made a halt,
Where such a shout there rose
Of "Marmion! Marmion!" that the cry
Up Flodden mountain shrilling high,
Startled the Scottish foes.

XXV.

Blount and Fitz-Eustace rested still
With Lady Clare upon the hill;
On which (for far the day was spent)
The western sunbeams now were bent.
The cry they heard, its meaning knew,
Could plain their distant comrades view:
Sadly to Blount did Eustace say,
"Unworthy office here to stay!
No hope of gilded spurs to-day.—
But, see! look up—on Flodden bent,*
The Scottish foe has fired his tent."
And sudden, as he spoke,
From the sharp ridges of the hill,
All downward to the banks of Till;
Was wreathed in sable smoke;
Volumed and vast, and rolling far,
The cloud enveloped Scotland's war,
As down the hill they broke;
Nor martial shout, nor minstrel tone,
Announced their march; their tread alone,
At times one warning trumpet blown,
At times a stifled hum,
Told England, from his mountain-throne
King James did rushing come.—
Scarce could they hear, or see their foes,
Until at weapon-point they close.—
They close, in clouds of smoke and dust,
With sword-sway, and with lance's thrust;
And such a yell was there,
Of sudden and portentous birth,
As if men fought upon the earth,
And fiends in upper air.
Long looked the anxious squires; their eye
Could in the darkness nought descry.

* The declivity of a hill.

XXVI.

At length the freshening western blast
Aside the shroud of battle cast;
And, first, the ridge of mingled spears
Above the brightening cloud appears;
And in the smoke the pennons flew,
As in the storm the white sea-mew.
Then marked they, dashing broad and far,
The broken billows of the war,
And plumèd crests of chieftains brave,
Floating like foam upon the wave;
But nought distinct they see:
Wide raged the battle on the plain;
Spears shook, and falchions flashed amain;
Fell England's arrow-flight like rain;
Crests rose, and stooped, and rose again,
Wild and disorderly.
Amid the scene of tumult, high
They saw Lord Marmion's falcon fly:
And stainless Tunstall's banner white,
And Edmund Howard's lion bright,
Still bear them bravely in the fight;
Although against them come,
Of gallant Gordons many a one,
And many a stubborn Highlandman,
And many a rugged Border clan,
With Huntley, and with Home.

XXVII.

Far on the left, unseen the while,
Stanley broke Lennox and Argyle;
Though there the western mountaineer
Rushed with bare bosom on the spear,
And flung the feeble targe aside,
And with both hands the broadsword plied:
'Twas vain.—But Fortune, on the right,
With fickle smile, cheered Scotland's fight.
Then fell that spotless banner white,
The Howard's lion fell;
Yet still Lord Marmion's falcon flew
With wavering flight, while fiercer grew
Around the battle-yell.
The Border slogan rent the sky:
A Home! a Gordon! was the cry;
Loud were the clanging blows;
Advanced,—forced back,—now low, now high,
The pennon sunk and rose;
As bends the bark's mast in the gale,
When rent are rigging, shrouds, and sail,
It wavered 'mid the foes.
No longer Blount the view could bear:—

"By heaven, and all its saints! I swear,
I will not see it lost!
Fitz-Eustace, you with Lady Clare
May bid your beads, and patter prayer,—
I gallop to the host."
And to the fray he rode amain,
Followed by all the archer train.
The fiery youth, with desperate charge,
Made, for a space, an opening large,—
The rescued banner rose,—
But darkly closed the war around,
Like pine-tree, rooted from the ground,
It sunk among the foes.
Then Eustace mounted too;—yet stayed,
As loath to leave the helpless maid,
When, fast as shaft can fly,
Blood-shot his eyes, his nostrils spread,
The loose rein dangling from his head,
Housing and saddle bloody red,
Lord Marmion's steed rushed by;
And Eustace, maddening at the sight,
A look and sign to Clara cast,
To mark he would return in haste,
Then plunged into the fight.

XXVIII.

Ask me not what the maiden feels,
Left in that dreadful hour alone:
Perchance her reason stoops, or reels;
Perchance a courage, not her own,
Braces her mind to desperate tone.—
The scattered van of England wheels;—
She only said, as loud in air
The tumult roared, "Is Wilton there?"
They fly, or, maddened by despair,
Fight but to die.—"Is Wilton there?"
With that, straight up the hill there rode
Two horsemen drenched with gore,
And in their arms, a helpless load,
A wounded knight they bore.
His hand still strained the broken brand;
His arms were smeared with blood and sand.
Dragged from among the horses' feet,
With dinted shield, and helmet beat,
The falcon-crest and plumage gone,
Can that be haughty Marmion! . . . .
Young Blount his armour did unlace,
And, gazing on his ghastly face,
Said,—"By Saint George, he's gone!
That spear-wound has our master sped,
And see the deep cut on his head!
Good night to Marmion."—

"Unnurtured Blount!—thy brawling cease:
He opes his eyes," said Eustace; "peace!"—

XXIX.

When, doffed his casque, he felt free air,
Around 'gan Marmion wildly stare:—
"Where's Harry Blount? Fitz-Eustace where?
Linger ye here, ye hearts of hare!
Redeem my pennon,—charge again;
Cry—'Marmion to the rescue!'—Vain!
Last of my race, on battle-plain
That shout shall ne'er be heard again!—
Yet my last thought is England's:—fly,
To Dacre bear my signet-ring;
Tell him his squadrons up to bring.—
Fitz-Eustace, to Lord Surrey hie:
Tunstall lies dead upon the field;
His life-blood stains the spotless shield:
Edmund is down;—my life is reft;—
The Admiral alone is left.
Let Stanley charge with spur of fire,—
With Chester charge, and Lancashire,
Full upon Scotland's central host,
Or victory and England's lost.—
Must I bid twice?—hence, varlets! fly!
Leave Marmion here alone—to die."—
They parted, and alone he lay;
Clare drew her from the sight away,
Till pain wrung forth a lowly moan,
And half he murmured,—"Is there none,
Of all my halls have nursed,
Page, squire, or groom, one cup to bring
Of blessèd water from the spring,
To slake my dying thirst!"—

XXX.

O, woman! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade
By the light quivering aspen made;
When pain and anguish wring the brow
A ministering angel thou!—
Scarce were the piteous accents said,
When, with the Baron's casque, the maid
To the nigh streamlet ran:
Forgot were hatred, wrongs, and fears;
The plaintive voice alone she hears,
Sees but the dying man.
She stooped her by the runnel's* side,
But in abhorrence backward drew,
For, oozing from the mountain's side,

* A small stream.

Where raged the war, a dark red tide
Was curdling in the streamlet blue.
Where shall she turn!—behold her mark
A little fountain cell,
Where water, clear as diamond-spark,
In a stone basin fell.
Above, some half-worn letters say,
"Drink . weary . pilgrim . drink . and . pray .
For . the . kind . soul . of . Sybil . Gray .
Who . built . this . cross . and . well."
She filled the helm, and back she hied,
And with surprise and joy espied
A Monk supporting Marmion's head;
A pious man, whom duty brought
To dubious verge of battle fought,
To shrieve the dying, bless the dead.

XXXI.

Deep drank Lord Marmion of the wave,
And as she stooped his brow to lave—
"Is it the hand of Clare," he said,
"Or injured Constance, bathes my head?"
Then, as remembrance rose,—
"Speak not to me of shrift or prayer!
I must redress her woes.
Short space, few words, are mine to spare;
Forgive and listen, gentle Clare!"—
"Alas!" she said, "the while,—
O think of your immortal weal!
In vain for Constance is your zeal;
She——died at Holy Isle."—
Lord Marmion started from the ground;
As light as if he felt no wound;
Though in the action burst the tide,
In torrents from his wounded side.
"Then it was truth!"—he said—"I knew
That the dark presage must be true.—
I would the Fiend, to whom belongs
The vengeance due to all her wrongs,
Would spare me but a day!
For wasting fire, and dying groan,
And priests slain on the altar-stone,
Might bribe him for delay.
It may not be!—this dizzy trance—
Curse on yon base marauder's lance,
And doubly cursed my failing brand!
A sinful heart makes feeble hand."—
Then, fainting, down on earth he sunk,
Supported by the trembling Monk.

XXXII.

With fruitless labour, Clara bound
And strove to stanch the gushing wound,

The Monk, with unavailing cares,
Exhausted all the Church's prayers;
Ever, he said, that, close and near,
A lady's voice was in his ear;
And that the priest he could not hear,
For that she ever sung,
"*In the lost battle, borne down by the flying,*
Where mingles war's rattle with groans of the dying!"
So the notes rung;
"Avoid thee, Fiend!—with cruel hand,
Shake not the dying sinner's sand!—
O look, my son, upon yon sign
Of the Redeemer's grace divine;
O think on faith and bliss!—
By many a death-bed I have been,
And many a sinner's parting seen,
But never aught like this."—
The war, that for a space did fail,
Now trebly thundering swelled the gale,
And—STANLEY! was the cry:—
A light on Marmion's visage spread,
And fired his glazing eye:
With dying hand, above his head
He shook the fragment of his blade,
And shouted "Victory!—
Charge, Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on!" . . . .
Were the last words of Marmion.

XXXIII.

By this, though deep the evening fell,
Still rose the battle's deadly swell;
For still the Scotts, around their king,
Unbroken, fought in desperate ring.
Where's now their victor vanward wing.
Where Huntley, and where Home?—
O for a blast of that dread horn,
On Fontarabian echoes born,
That to King Charles did come,
When Rowland brave, and Oliver,
And every paladin and peer,
On Roncesvalles died!
Such blast might warn them, not in vain,
To quit the plunder of the slain,
And turn the doubtful day again,
While yet on Flodden side,
Afar, the Royal Standard flies,
And round it toils and bleeds and dies,
Our Caledonian pride!
In vain the wish—for far away,
While spoil and havoc mark their way,
Near Sybil's Cross the plunderers stray.—

"O Lady," cried the Monk, "away!"—
And placed her on her steed;
And led her to the chapel fair,
Of Tilmouth upon Tweed.
There all the night they spent in prayer,
And, at the dawn of morning, there
She met her kinsman, Lord Fitz-Clare.

XXXIV.

But as they left the darkening heath,
More desperate grew the strife of death.
The English shafts in volleys hailed,
In headlong charge their horse assailed:
Front, flank, and rear, the squadrons sweep,
To break the Scottish circle deep,
That fought around their king.
But yet, though thick the shafts as snow,
Though charging knights like whirlwinds go,
Though bill-men ply the ghastly blow,
Unbroken was the ring;
The stubborn spearmen still made good
Their dark impenetrable wood,
Each stepping where his comrade stood,
The instant that he fell.
No thought was there of dastard flight;
Linked in the serried phalanx tight,
Groom fought like noble, squire like knight,
As fearlessly and well;
Till utter darkness closed her wing
O'er their thin host and wounded king.
Then skilful Surrey's sage commands
Led back from strife his shattered bands;
And from the charge they drew,
As mountain-waves, from wasted lands,
Sweep back to ocean blue.
Then did their loss his foemen know;
Their king, their lords, their mightiest low,
They melted from the field as snow,
When streams are swoln, and south winds blow,
Dissolves in silent dew.
Tweed's echoes heard the ceaseless plash,
While many a broken band,
Disordered, through her currents dash,
To gain the Scottish land;
To town and tower, to down and dale,
To tell red Flodden's dismal tale,
And raise the universal wail.
Tradition, legend, tune, and song,
Shall many an age that wail prolong:
Still from the sire the son shall hear
Of the stern strife, and carnage drear,
Of Flodden's fatal field.

Where shivered was fair Scotland's spear,
And broken was her shield!

XXXV.

Day dawns upon the mountain's side:—
There, Scotland! lay thy bravest pride,
Chiefs, knights, and nobles, many a one;
The sad survivors all are gone.—
View not that corpse mistrustfully,
Defaced and mangled though it be;
Nor to yon Border castle high
Look northward with upbraiding eye;*
Nor cherish hope in vain,
That, journeying far on foreign strand,
The Royal Pilgrim to his land
May yet return again.
He saw the wreck his rashness wrought;
Reckless of life, he desperate fought,
And fell on Flodden plain:
And well in death his trusty brand,
Firm clenched within his manly hand,
Beseemed the monarch slain.
But, O! how changed since yon blithe night!—
Gladly I turn me from the sight,
Unto my tale again.

XXXVI.

Short is my tale:—Fitz-Eustace' care
A pierced and mangled body bare
To moated Lichfield's lofty pile;
And there, beneath the southern aisle,
A tomb, with Gothic sculpture fair,
Did long Lord Marmion's image bear.
(Now vainly for its site you look;
'Twas levelled, when fanatic Brook†
The fair cathedral stormed and took;

*There can be no doubt that King James fell in the battle of Flodden He was killed, says the curious French Gazette, within a lance's length of the earl of Surrey; and the same account adds that none of his division were made prisoners, though many were killed; a circumstance that testifies the desperation of their resistance. Other reports gave a still more romantic turn to the king's fate, and averred that James, weary of greatness, after the carnage among his nobles, had gone on a pilgrimage to merit absolution for the death of his father, and the breach of his oath of amity to Henry. In particular, it was objected to the English, that they could never show the token of the iron belt; they produce a better evidence, the monarch's sword and dagger, which are still preserved in the Herald's College in London. An unhewn column marks the spot where James fell, still called the King's Stone.

†This storm of Lichfield cathedral, which had been garrisoned on the part of the king, took place in the great civil war. Lord Brook, who, with Sir John Gill, commanded the assailants, was shot with a musket-ball through the visor of his helmet. The royalists re-

But, thanks to heaven and good Saint Chad,
A guerdon meet the spoiler had!)
There erst was martial Marmion found,
His feet upon a couchant hound,
His hands to heaven upraised;
And all around, on scutcheon rich,
And tablet carved, and fretted niche,
His arms and feats were blazed.
And yet, though all was carved so fair,
And priests for Marmion breathed the prayer,
The last Lord Marmion lay not there.
From Ettricke woods, a peasant swain
Followed his lord to Flodden plain.—
One of those flowers, whom plaintive lay
In Scotland mourns as "wede away:"
Sore wounded, Sybil's Cross he spied,
And dragged him to its foot, and died,
Close by the noble Marmion's side.
The spoilers stripped and gashed the slain,
And thus their corpses were mista'en;
And thus, in the proud Baron's tomb,
The lowly woodsman took the room.

XXXVII.

Less easy task it were, to show
Lord Marmion's nameless grave, and low.
They dug his grave e'en where he lay,
But every mark is gone;
Time's wasting hand has done away
The simple Cross of Sybil Gray,
And broke her font of stone:
But yet from out the little hill
Oozes the slender springlet still.
Oft halts the stranger there,
For thence may best his curious eye
The memorable field descry;
And shepherd boys repair
To seek the water-flag and rush,
And rest them by the hazel bush,
And plait their garlands fair;
Nor dream they sit upon the grave,
That holds the bones of Marmion brave.—
When thou shalt find the little hill,
With thy heart commune, and be still.
If ever, in temptation strong,
Thou leftst the right path for the wrong;

marked that he was killed by a shot fired from St. Chad's Cathedral, and upon St. Chad's day, and received his death-wound in the very eye with which, he had said, he hoped to see the ruins of all the cathedrals in England. The magnificent church in question suffered cruelly upon this, and other occasions; the principal spire being ruined by the fire of the besiegers.

If every devious step, thus trode,
Still led the farther from the road;
Dread thou to speak presumptuous doom,
On noble Marmion's lowly tomb;
But say, "He died a gallant knight,
With sword in hand, for England's right."

XXXVIII.

I do not rhyme to that dull elf,
Who cannot image to himself,
That all through Flodden's dismal night,
Wilton was foremost in the fight;
That, when brave Surrey's steed was slain,
'Twas Wilton mounted him again;
'Twas Wilton's brand that deepest hewed,
Amid the spearmen's stubborn wood:
Unnamed by Hollinshed or Hall,
He was the living soul of all;
That, after fight, his faith made plain,
He won his rank and lands again;
And charged his old paternal shield
With bearings won on Flodden field.—
Nor sing I to that simple maid,
To whom it must in terms be said,
That king and kinsmen did agree
To bless fair Clara's constancy;
Who cannot, unless I relate,
Paint to her mind the bridal's state;
That Wolsey's voice the blessing spoke;
More, Sands, and Denny, passed the joke:
That bluff King Hal the curtain drew,
And Catherine's hand the stocking threw;
And afterwards, for many a day,
That it was held enough to say,
In blessing to a wedded pair,
"Love they like Wilton and like Clare!"

L'Envoy.

TO THE READER.

Why then a final note prolong,
Or lengthen out a closing song,
Unless to bid the gentles speed,
Who long have listed to my rede?*
To Statesmen grave, if such may deign
To read the Minstrel's idle strain,
Sound head, clean hand, and piercing wit,
And patriotic heart—as PITT!

* Used generally for a *tale* or *discourse*.

A garland for the hero's crest,
And twined by her he loves the best;
To every lovely lady bright,
What can I wish but faithful knight?
To every faithful lover too,
What can I wish but lady true?
And knowledge to the studious sage;
And pillow soft to head of age.
To thee, dear school-boy, whom my lay
Has cheated of thy hour of play,
Light task, and merry holiday!
To all, to each, a fair good night,
And pleasing dreams, and slumbers light!

THE

LADY OF THE LAKE.

A Poem.

IN SIX CANTOS.

TO

THE MOST NOBLE

JOHN JAMES, MARQUIS OF ABERCORN,

&c. &c. &c.

THIS POEM IS INSCRIBED BY THE AUTHOR.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1810.

Argument.

The Scene of the following Poem is laid chiefly in the vicinity of Loch Katrine, in the West Highlands of Perthshire. The time of action includes six days, and the transactions of each day occupy a Canto.

"The Lady of the Lake."

Scott. Page 233.

THE

LADY OF THE LAKE.

CANTO FIRST.

THE CHASE.

Harp of the North! that mouldering long hast hung
  On the witch-elm that shades Saint Fillan's spring,
And down the fitful breeze thy numbers flung,
  Till envious ivy did around thee cling,
Muffling with verdant ringlet every string,—
  O minstrel Harp, still must thine accents sleep?
'Mid rustling leaves and fountains murmuring,
  Still must thy sweeter sounds their silence keep,
Nor bid a warrior smile, nor teach a maid to weep?

Not thus, in ancient days of Caledon,
  Was thy voice mute amid the festal crowd,
When lay of hopeless love, or glory won,
  Aroused the fearful or subdued the proud.
At each according pause was heard aloud
  Thine ardent symphony sublime and high!
Fair dames and crested chiefs attention bowed;
  For still the burthen of thy minstrelsy
Was Knighthood's dauntless deed, and Beauty's matchless eye.

O wake once more! how rude soe'er the hand
  That ventures o'er thy magic maze to stray;
O wake once more! though scarce my skill command
  Some feeble echoing of thine earlier lay;
Though harsh and faint, and soon to die away,
  And all unworthy of thy nobler strain,
Yet if one heart throb higher at its sway,
  The wizard note has not been touched in vain.
Then silent be no more! Enchantress, wake again!

I.

The stag at eve had drunk his fill,
Where danced the moon on Monan's rill,
And deep his midnight lair had made
In lone Glenartney's hazel shade:

But, when the sun his beacon red
Had kindled on Benvoirlich's* head,
The deep-mouthed bloodhound's heavy bay
Resounded up the rocky way,
And faint, from farther distance borne,
Were heard the clanging hoof and horn.

II.

As chief who hears his warder call,
"To arms! the foemen storm the wall,"—
The antlered monarch of the waste
Sprung from his heathery couch in haste.
But, ere his fleet career he took,
The dew-drops from his flanks he shook;
Like crested leader proud and high,
Tossed his beamed frontlet to the sky;
A moment gazed adown the dale,
A moment snuffed the tainted gale,
A moment listened to the cry,
That thickened as the chase drew nigh;
Then, as the headmost foes appeared,
With one brave bound the copse he cleared,
And stretching forward free and far,
Sought the wild heaths of Uam-Var.

III.

Yelled on the view the opening pack,
Rock, glen, and cavern paid them back;
To many a mingled sound at once
The awakened mountain gave response.
A hundred dogs bayed deep and strong,
Clattered a hundred steeds along,
Their peal the merry horns rang out,
A hundred voices joined the shout;
With hark and whoop and wild halloo,
No rest Benvoirlich's echoes knew.
Far from the tumult fled the roe,
Close in her covert cowered the doe,
The falcon, from her cairn on high,
Cast on the rout a wondering eye,
Till far beyond her piercing ken
The hurricane had swept the glen.
Faint, and more faint, its failing din
Returned from cavern, cliff, and linn,
And silence settled, wide and still,
On the lone wood and mighty hill.

IV.

Less loud the sounds of sylvan war
Disturbed the heights of Uam-Var,†

* One of the Grampians.

† Ua-var, as the name is pronounced, or more properly *Uaigh mor*, is a mountain to the north-east of the village of Callander, in Men-

And roused the cavern, where, 'tis told,
A giant made his den of old;
For ere that steep ascent was won,
High in his pathway hung the sun,
And many a gallant, stayed perforce,
Was fain to breathe his faltering horse;
And of the trackers of the deer
Scarce half the lessening pack was near;
So shrewdly, on the mountain-side,
Had the bold burst their mettle tried.

V.

The noble Stag was pausing now
Upon the mountain's southern brow
Where broad extended, far beneath,
The varied realms of fair Menteith.
With anxious eye he wandered o'er
Mountain and meadow, moss and moor,
And pondered refuge from his toil,
By far Lochard or Aberfoyle.
But nearer was the copse-wood grey,
That waved and wept on Loch-Achray,
And mingled with the pine-trees blue
On the bold cliffs of Ben-venue.
Fresh vigour with the hope returned,
With flying foot the heath he spurned,
Held westward with unwearied race,
And left behind the panting chase.

VI.

'Twere long to tell what steeds gave o'er,
As swept the hunt through Cambus-more;*
What reins were tightened in despair,
When rose Benledi's† ridge in air;
Who flagged upon Bochastle's heath,
Who shunned to stem the flooded Teith,—
For twice, that day from shore to shore,
The gallant stag swam stoutly o'er,
Few were the stragglers, following far,
That reached the lake of Vennachar;
And when the Brigg of Turk‡ was won,
The headmost horseman rode alone.

VII.

Alone, but with unbated zeal,
That horseman plied the scourge and steel;

teith, deriving its name, which signifies the great den, or cavern, from a sort of retreat among the rocks on the south side, said, by tradition, to have been the abode of a giant. In latter times, it was the refuge of robbers and banditti, who have been only extirpated within these forty or fifty years.

* A family seat about two miles from Callander, on the Keltie.

† A mountain near Callander. Its name signifies "the mountain of God."

‡ A bridge about a mile above Loch Vennachar.

For, jaded now, and spent with toil,
Embossed with foam, and dark with soil,
While every gasp with sobs he drew,
The labouring stag strained full in view.
Two dogs of black Saint Hubert's breed,
Unmatched for courage, breath, and speed,
Fast on his flying traces came,
And all but won that desperate game;
For, scarce a spear's length from his haunch,
Vindictive toiled the bloodhounds stanch;
Nor nearer might the dogs attain,
Nor farther might the quarry strain.
Thus up the margin of the lake,
Between the precipice and brake,
O'er stock and rock their race they take.

VIII.

The Hunter marked that mountain high,
The lone lake's western boundary,
And deemed the stag must turn to bay,*
Where that rude rampart barred the way;
Already glorying in the prize,
Measured his antlers with his eyes;
For the death-wound, and death halloo,
Mustered his breath, his whinyard† drew;
But, thundering as he came prepared,
With ready arm and weapon bared,
The wily quarry shunned the shock,
And turned him from the opposing rock;
Then, dashing down a darksome glen,
Soon lost to hound and hunter's ken,
In the deep Trosach's wildest nook
His solitary refuge took.
There, while close couched, the thicket shed
Cold dews and wild flowers on his head,
He heard the baffled dogs in vain
Rave through the hollow pass amain,
Chiding the rocks that yelled again.

IX.

Close on the hounds the hunter came,
To cheer them on the vanished game;

* When the stag turned to bay, the ancient hunter had the perilous task of going in upon, and killing or disabling the desperate animal. At certain times of the year this was held particularly dangerous, a wound received from a stag's horn being then deemed poisonous, and more dangerous than one from the tusks of a boar, as the old rhyme testifies:—

"If thou be hurt with hart, it brings thee to thy bier,
But barber's hand will boar's hurt heal, therefore thou needst not fear."

† A short hanger used as a knife at meals, and as a sword in broils. —*Jamieson.*

But, stumbling in the rugged dell,
The gallant horse exhausted fell.
The impatient rider strove in vain
To rouse him with the spur and rein,
For the good steed, his labours o'er,
Stretched his stiff limbs, to rise no more;
Then, touched with pity and remorse,
He sorrowed o'er the expiring horse.
"I little thought, when first thy rein
I slacked upon the banks of Seine,
That Highland eagle e'er should feed
On thy fleet limbs, my matchless steed!
Woe worth the chase, woe worth the day,
That cost thy life, my gallant grey!"

X.

Then through the dell his horn resounds,
From vain pursuit to call the hounds.
Back limped, with slow and crippled pace,
The sulky leaders of the chase;
Close to their master's side they pressed,
With drooping tail and humbled crest;
But still the dingle's hollow throat
Prolonged the swelling bugle-note.
The owlets started from their dream,
The eagles answered with their scream,
Round and around the sounds were cast,
Till echo seemed an answering blast;
And on the hunter hied his way,
To join some comrades of the day;*
Yet often paused, so strange the road.
So wondrous were the scenes it showed.

XI.

The western waves of ebbing day
Rolled o'er the glen their level way;
Each purple peak, each flinty spire,
Was bathed in floods of living fire.
But not a setting beam could glow
Within the dark ravines below,
Where twined the path, in shadow hid,
Round many a rocky pyramid,
Shooting abruptly from the dell
Its thunder-splintered pinnacle;
Round many an insulated mass,
The native bulwarks of the pass,
Huge as the tower which builders vain
Presumptuous piled on Shinar's† plain.

* First edition,—

"And on the hunter hied his pace,
To join some comrades of the chase."

† Gen. xi. 1-10.

Their rocky summits, split and rent,
Formed turret, dome, or battlement,
Or seemed fantastically set
With cupola or minaret,
Wild crests as pagod ever decked,
Or mosque of eastern architect.
Nor were these earth-born castles bare,
Nor lacked they many a banner fair;
For, from their shivered brows displayed,
Far o'er the unfathomable glade,
All twinkling with the dew-drop sheen,
The brier-rose fell in streamers green,
And creeping shrubs of thousand dyes,
Waved in the west-wind's summer sighs.

XII.

Boon nature scattered, free and wild,
Each plant or flower, the mountain's child.
Here eglantine embalmed the air,
Hawthorn and hazel mingled there;
The primrose pale, and violet flower,
Found in each cliff a narrow bower;
Fox-glove and night-shade, side by side,
Emblems of punishment and pride,
Grouped their dark hues with every stain,
The weather-beaten crags retain.
With boughs that quaked at every breath,
Grey birch and aspen wept beneath;
Aloft, the ash and warrior oak
Cast anchor in the rifted rock;
And higher yet, the pine-tree hung
His shattered* trunk, and frequent flung,
Where seemed the cliffs to meet on high,
His boughs athwart the narrowed sky:
Highest of all, where white peaks glanced,
Where glistening streamers waved and danced,
The wanderer's eye could barely view
The summer heaven's delicious blue;
So wondrous wild, the whole might seem
The scenery of a fairy dream.

XIII.

Onward, amid the copse 'gan peep
A narrow inlet, still and deep,
Affording scarce such breadth of brim,
As served the wild-duck's brood to swim;
Lost for a space, through thickets veering,
But broader when again appearing,
Tall rocks and tufted knolls their face
Could on the dark-blue mirror trace;

* First edition, "scattered."

And farther as the hunter strayed,
Still broader sweep its channels made,
The shaggy mounds no longer stood,
Emerging from entangled wood,
But, wave-encircled, seemed to float,
Like castle girdled with its moat;
Yet broader floods extending still,
Divide them from their parent hill,
Till each, retiring, claims to be
An islet in an inland sea.

XIV.

And now, to issue from the glen,
No pathway meets the wanderer's ken,
Unless he climb, with footing nice,
A far projecting precipice.*
The broom's tough roots his ladder made,
The hazel saplings lent their aid;
And thus an airy point he won,
Where, gleaming with the setting sun,
One burnished sheet of living gold,
Loch-Katrine lay beneath him rolled;
In all her length far winding lay,
With promontory, creek, and bay,
And islands that, empurpled bright,
Floated amid the livelier light;
And mountains, that like giants stand,
To sentinel enchanted land.
High on the south, huge Ben-venue†
Down to the lake in masses threw
Crags, knolls, and mounds, confusedly hurled,
The fragments of an earlier world;
A wildering forest feathered o'er
His ruined sides and summit hoar,
While on the north, through middle air,
Ben-an heaved high his forehead bare.

XV.

From the steep promontory gazed
The stranger, raptured and amazed,
And, "What a scene were here," he cried,
"For princely pomp or churchman's pride!
On this bold brow, a lordly tower;
In that soft vale, a lady's bower;
On yonder meadow, far away,
The turrets of a cloister grey;
How blithely might the bugle-horn
Chide, on the lake, the lingering morn!

* Until the present road was made through the romantic pass which I have presumptuously attempted to describe, there was no mode of issuing out of the defile called the Trosachs, excepting by a sort of ladder, composed of the branches and roots of the trees.

† *i. e.* the little mountain.

How sweet, at eve, the lover's lute,
Chime, when the groves are still and mute!
And, when the midnight moon should* lave
Her forehead in the silver wave,
How solemn on the ear would come
The holy matins' distant hum,
While the deep peal's commanding tone
Should wake, in yonder islet lone,
A sainted hermit from his cell,
To drop a bead with every knell—
And bugle, lute, and bell, and all,
Should each bewildered stranger call
To friendly feast and lighted hall.

XVI.

"Blithe were it then to wander here!
But now,—beshrew yon nimble deer,—
Like that same hermit's, thin and spare,
The copse must give my evening fare;
Some mossy bank my couch must be,
Some rustling oak my canopy.
Yet pass we that;—the war and chase
Give little choice of resting place;
A summer night, in green-wood spent,
Were but to-morrow's merriment;—
But hosts may in these wilds abound,
Such as are better missed than found:
To meet with Highland plunderers† here
Were worse than loss of steed or deer.—
I am alone;—my bugle strain
May call some straggler of the train;
Or, fall the worst that may betide,
Ere now this falchion has been tried."

XVII.

But scarce again his horn he wound,
When lo! forth starting at the sound,
From underneath an aged oak,
That slanted from the islet rock,
A Damsel guider of its way,
A little skiff shot to the bay,
That round the promontory steep
Led its deep line in graceful sweep,
Eddying, in almost viewless wave,
The weeping willow twig to lave,
And kiss, with whispering sound and slow,
The beach of pebbles bright as snow.
The boat had touched the silver strand,
Just as the Hunter left his stand,

* First edition, "did."

† The clans who inhabited the romantic regions in the neighbourhood of Loch Katrine, were, even until a late period, much addicted to predatory excursions upon their Lowland neighbours.

And stood concealed amid the brake,
To view this Lady of the Lake.
The maiden paused, as if again
She thought to catch the distant strain.
With head up-raised, and look intent,
And eye and ear attentive bent,
And locks flung back, and lips apart,
Like monument of Grecian art.
In listening mood she seemed to stand,
The guardian Naiad of the strand.

XVIII.

And ne'er did Grecian chisel trace
A Nymph, a Naiad, or a Grace,
Of finer form, or lovelier face!
What though the sun, with ardent frown,
Had slightly tinged her cheek with brown,—
The sportive toil, which, short and light,
Had dyed her glowing hue so bright,
Served too in hastier swell to show
Short glimpses of a breast of snow;
What though no rule of courtly grace
To measurad mood had trained her pace,—
A foot more light, a step more true,
Ne'er from the heath-flower dashed the dew;
E'en the slight hare-bell raised its head,
Elastic from her airy tread:
What though upon her speech there hung
The accents of the mountain tongue,—
Those silver sounds, so soft, so dear,
The listener held his breath to hear.

XIX.

A chieftain's daughter seemed the maid;
Her satin snood,* her silken plaid,
Her golden brooch, such birth betrayed.
And seldom was a snood amid
Such wild luxuriant ringlets hid,
Whose glossy black to shame might bring
The plumage of the raven's wing;
And seldom o'er a breast so fair,
Mantled a plaid with modest care,
And never brooch the folds combined
Above a heart more good and kind.
Her kindness and her worth to spy,
You need but gaze on Ellen's eye;
Not Katrine, in her mirror blue,
Gives back the shaggy banks more true,
Than every free-born glance confessed
The guileless movements of her breast;

* A fillet with which the hair of a young woman's head is bound up.—*Jamieson.*

Whether joy danced in her dark eye,
Or woe or pity claimed a sigh,
Or filial love was glowing there,
Or meek devotion poured a prayer,
Or tale of injury called forth
The indignant spirit of the north.
One only passion, unrevealed,
With maiden pride, the maid concealed,
Yet not less purely felt the flame;—
O! need I tell that passion's name?

XX.

Impatient of the silent horn,
Now on the gale her voice was borne:—
"Father!" she cried; the rocks around
Loved to prolong the gentle sound.
Awhile she paused, no answer came,—
"Malcolm, was thine the blast?" the name
Less resolutely uttered fell,
The echoes could not catch the swell.
"A stranger I," the Huntsman said,
Advancing from the hazel shade.
The maid alarmed, with hasty oar,
Pushed her light shallop from the shore,
And, when a space was gained between,
Closer she drew her bosom's screen;
(So forth the startled swan would swing,
So turn to prune his ruffled wing,)
Then safe, though fluttered and amazed,
She paused, and on the stranger gazed.
Not his the form, nor his the eye,
That youthful maidens wont to fly.

XXI.

On his bold visage, middle age
Had slightly pressed its signet sage,
Yet had not quenched the open truth,
And fiery vehemence of youth;
Forward and frolic glee was there,
The will to do, the soul to dare,
The sparkling glance, soon blown to fire,
Of hasty love, or headlong ire,
His limbs were cast in manly mould,
For hardy sports, or contest bold;
And though in peaceful garb arrayed,
And weaponless, except his blade,
His stately mien as well implied
A high-born heart, a martial pride,
As if a baron's crest he wore,
And sheathed in armour trod the shore.
Slighting the petty need he showed,
He told of his benighted road:

His ready speech flowed fair and free,
In phrase of gentlest courtesy;
Yet seemed that tone, and gesture bland,
Less used to sue than to command.

XXII.

Awhile the maid the stranger eyed,
And, reassured, at last replied,
That Highland halls were open still
To wildered wanderers of the hill,
"Nor think you unexpected come
To yon lone isle, our desert home;
Before the heath had lost the dew,
This morn, a couch was pulled for you;
On yonder mountain's purple head
Have ptarmigan and heath-cock bled,
And our broad nets have swept the mere,
To furnish forth your evening cheer."—
"Now, by the rood, my lovely maid,
Your courtesy has erred," he said;
"No right have I to claim, misplaced,
The welcome of expected guest.
A wanderer here by fortune tossed,
My way, my friends, my courser lost,
I ne'er before, believe me, fair,
Have ever drawn your mountain air,
Till on this lake's romantic strand,
I found a fay in fairy land."

XXIII.

"I well believe," the maid replied,
As her light skiff approached the side,
"I well believe, that ne'er before
Your foot has trod Loch-Katrine's shore!
But yet, as far as yesternight,
Old Allan-bane foretold your plight,—
A grey-haired sire, whose eye intent
Was on the visioned future bent.*
He saw your steed, a dappled grey,
Lie dead beneath the birchen way;
Painted exact your form and mien,
Your hunting suit of Lincoln green,
That tasselled horn so gaily gilt,
That falchion's crooked blade and hilt,
That cap with heron's plumage trim,
And yon two hounds so dark and grim.
He bade that all should ready be,
To grace a guest of fair degree;
But light I held his prophecy,

* If force of evidence could authorize us to believe things inconsistent with the general laws of nature, enough might be produced in favour of the existence of the Second Sight.

And deemed it was my father's horn,
Whose echoes o'er the lake were borne."

XXIV.

The stranger smiled:—"Since to your home,
A destined errant knight I come,
Announced by prophet sooth and old,
Doomed, doubtless, for achievement bold,
I'll lightly front each high emprize,
For one kind glance of those bright eyes:
Permit me, first, the task to guide
Your fairy frigate o'er the tide."
The maid with smile suppressed and sly,
The toil unwonted saw him try;
For seldom, sure, if e'er before,
His noble hand had grasped an oar;
Yet with main strength his strokes he drew,
And o'er the lake the shallop flew;
With heads erect, and whimpering cry,
The hounds behind their passage ply.
Nor frequent does the bright oar break
The darkening mirror of the lake,
Until the rocky isle they reach,
And moor their shallop on the beach.

XXV.

The stranger viewed the shore around;
'Twas all so close with copse-wood bound,
Nor track nor pathway might declare
That human foot frequented there,
Until the mountain-maiden showed
A clambering unsuspected road,
That winded through the tangled screen,
And opened on a narrow green,
Where weeping birch and willow round
With their long fibres swept the ground;
Here, for retreat in dangerous hour,
Some chief had framed a rustic bower.*

XXVI.

It was a lodge of ample size,
But strange of structure and device;
Of such materials, as around
The workman's hand had readiest found.
Lopped of their boughs, their hoar trunks bared,
And by the hatchet rudely squared,

* The Celtic chieftains, whose lives were continually exposed to peril, had usually, in the most retired spot of their domains, some place of retreat for the hour of necessity, which, as circumstances would admit, was a tower, a cavern, or a rustic hut in a strong and secluded situation. In one of these Charles Edward took refuge after the battle of Culloden.

To give the walls their destined height,
The sturdy oak and ash unite;
While moss and clay and leaves combined
To fence each crevice from the wind.
The lighter pine-trees over-head,
Their slender length for rafters spread,
And withered heath and rushes dry
Supplied a russet canopy.
Due westward, fronting to the green,
A rural portico was seen,
Aloft on native pillars borne,
Of mountain fir with bark unshorn,
Where Ellen's hand had taught to twine
The ivy and Idæan vine,
The clematis, the favoured flower,
Which boasts the name of virgin bower,
And every hardy plant could bear
Loch-Katrine's keen and searching air
An instant in this porch she stayed,
And gaily to the stranger said,
"On Heaven and on thy lady call,
And enter the enchanted hall!"

XXVII.

"My hope, my heaven, my trust must be,
My gentle guide, in following thee."
He crossed the threshold—and a clang
Of angry steel that instant rang.
To his bold brow his spirit rushed,
But soon for vain alarm he blushed,
When on the floor he saw displayed,
Cause of the din, a naked blade
Dropped from the sheath, that careless flung
Upon a stag's huge antlers swung;
For all around, the walls to grace,
Hung trophies of the fight or chase:
A target there, a bugle here,
A battle-axe, a hunting-spear,
And broad-swords, bows, and arrows store,
With the tusked trophies of the boar.
Here grins the wolf as when he died,
And there the wild-cat's brindled* hide
The frontlet of the elk adorns,
Or mantles o'er the bison's horns;
Pennons and flags defaced and stained,
That blackening streaks of blood retained,
And deer-skins, dappled, dun, and white,
With otter's fur and seal's unite,
In rude and uncouth tapestry all,
To garnish forth the sylvan hall.

* Streaked.

XXVIII.

The wondering stranger round him gazed,
And next the fallen weapon raised;
Few were the arms whose sinewy strength
Sufficed to stretch it forth at length.
And as the brand he poised and swayed,
"I never knew but one," he said,
"Whose stalwart arm might brook to wield
A blade like this in battle-field."
She sighed, then smiled and took the word;
"You see the guardian champion's sword:
As light it trembles in his hand,
As in my grasp a hazel wand;
My sire's tall form might grace the part
Of Ferragus, or Ascabart:*
But in the absent giant's hold
Are women now, and menials old."

XXIX.

The mistress of the mansion came,
Mature of age, a graceful dame;
Whose easy step and stately port
Had well become a princely court,
To whom, though more than kindred knew,
Young Ellen gave a mother's due.
Meet welcome to her guest she made,
And every courteous rite was paid,
That hospitality could claim,
Though all unasked his birth and name;†
Such then the reverence to a guest,
That fellest foe might join the feast,
And from his deadliest foeman's door
Unquestioned turn, the banquet o'er.
At length his rank the stranger names—
"The Knight of Snowdoun, James Fitz-James;
Lord of a barren heritage,
Which his brave sires, from age to age,
By their good swords, had held with toil;
His sire had fallen in such turmoil,
And he, God wot, was forced to stand
Oft for his right with blade in hand.

* These two sons of Anak flourished in romantic fable. The first is known to the admirers of Ariosto, by the name of Ferrau. He was an antagonist of Orlando, and was at length slain by him in single combat. Ascapart, or Ascabart, makes a very material figure in the history of Beirs of Hampton, by whom he was conquered.

† The Highlanders are said to have considered it as churlish to ask a stranger his name and lineage, before he had taken refreshment. Feuds were so frequent among them, that a contrary rule would, in many cases, have produced the discovery of some circumstance, which might have excluded the guest from the benefit of the assistance he stood in need of.

This morning with Lord Moray's train
He chased a stalwart stag in vain,
Outstripped his comrades, missed the deer,
Lost his good steed, and wandered here."

XXX.

Fain would the Knight in turn require
The name and state of Ellen's sire;
Well showed the elder lady's mien,
That courts and cities she had seen;
Ellen, though more her looks displayed
The simple grace of sylvan maid,
In speech and gesture, form and face,
Showed she was come of gentle race;
'Twere strange in ruder rank to find
Such looks, such manners, and such mind.
Each hint the Knight of Snowdoun gave,
Dame Margaret heard with silence grave;
Or Ellen, innocently gay,
Turned all inquiry light away.
"Weird women we! by dale and down,
We dwell afar from tower and town.
We stem the flood, we ride the blast,
On wandering knights our spells we cast;
While viewless minstrels touch the string
'Tis thus our charmèd rhymes we sing."
She sang, and still a harp unseen
Filled up the symphony between.

XXXI.

SONG.

"Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking!
Dream of battled fields no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking.
In our isle's enchanted hall,
Hands unseen thy couch are strewing,
Fairy strains of music fall,
Every sense in slumber dewing.
Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Dream of fighting fields no more;
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking,
Morn of toil, nor night of waking.

"No rude sound shall reach thine ear,
Armour's clang, or war-steed champing,
Trump nor pibroch* summon here
Mustering clan, or squadron tramping.

* A Highland air, suited to the particular passion which the musician would excite or assuage.—*Jamieson.*

Yet the lark's shrill fife may come,
At the daybreak from the fallow,
And the bittern sound his drum,
Booming from the sedgy shallow.
Ruder sounds shall none be near,
Guards nor warders challenge here,
Here's no war-steed's neigh and champing,
Shouting clans or squadrons stamping."

XXXII.

She paused—then, blushing, led the lay
To grace the stranger of the day;
Her mellow notes awhile prolong
The cadence of the flowing song,
Till to her lips in measured frame
The minstrel verse spontaneous came.

SONG CONTINUED.

"Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done,
While our slumbrous spells assail ye,
Dream not with the rising sun
Bugles here shall sound reveillé.
Sleep! the deer is in his den;
Sleep! thy hounds are by thee lying;
Sleep! nor dream in yonder glen,
How thy gallant steed lay dying.
Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done,
Think not of the rising sun,
For at dawning to assail ye,
Here no bugles sound reveillé."

XXXIII.

The hall was cleared—the stranger's bed
Was there of mountain heather spread,
Where oft a hundred guests had lain,
And dreamed their forest sports again.
But vainly did the heath-flower shed
Its moorland fragrance round his head;
Not Ellen's spell had lulled to rest
The fever of his troubled breast;
In broken dreams the image rose
Of varied perils, pains, and woes.
His steed now flounders in the brake,
Now sinks his barge upon the lake;
Now leader of a broken host,
His standard falls, his honour's lost.
Then, from my couch may heavenly might
Chase that worst phantom of the night!—
Again returned the scenes of youth,
Of confident undoubting truth;
Again his soul he interchanged
With friends whose hearts were long estranged.

They come, in dim procession led,
The cold, the faithless, and the dead;
As warm each hand, each brow as gay,
As if they parted yesterday.
And doubt distracts him at the view,
O were his senses false or true!
Dreamed he of death, or broken vow,
Or is it all a vision now?

XXXIV.

At length, with Ellen in a grove,
He seemed to walk and speak of love;
She listened with a blush and sigh,
His suit was warm, his hopes were high.
He sought her yielded hand to clasp,
And a cold gauntlet met his grasp:
The phantom's sex was changed and gone,
Upon its head a helmet shone;
Slowly enlarged to giant size,
With darkened cheek and threatening eyes,
The grisly visage, stern and hoar,
To Ellen still a likeness bore.—
He woke, and, panting with affright,
Recalled the vision of the night.
The hearth's decaying brands were red,
And deep and dusky lustre shed,
Half showing, half concealing all
The uncouth trophies of the hall.
'Mid those the stranger fixed his eye
Where that huge falchion hung on high,
And thoughts on thoughts, a countless throng,
Rushed, chasing countless thoughts along,
Until, the giddy whirl to cure,
He rose, and sought the moonshine pure.

XXXV.

The wild rose, eglantine, and broom,
Wafted around their rich perfume;
The birch-trees wept in fragrant balm,
The aspens slept beneath the calm;
The silver light, with quivering glance,
Played on the water's still expanse;
Wild were the heart whose passion's sway
Could rage beneath the sober ray!
He felt its calm, that warrior guest,
While thus he communed with his breast:
"Why is it at each turn I trace
Some memory of that exiled race?
Can I not mountain maiden spy,
But she must bear the Douglas eye?
Can I not view a Highland brand,
But it must match the Douglas hand?

Can I not frame a fevered dream,
But still the Douglas is the theme?—
I'll dream no more—by manly mind
Not even in sleep is will resigned.
My midnight orison said o'er,
I'll turn to rest, and dream no more."
His midnight orison he told,
A prayer with every bead of gold,
Consigned to Heaven his cares and woes,
And sunk in undisturbed repose;
Until the heath-cock shrilly crew,
And morning dawned on Ben-venue.

CANTO SECOND.

THE ISLAND.

I.

At morn the black-cock trims his jetty wing,
'Tis morning prompts the linnet's blithest lay,
All Nature's children feel the matin spring
Of life reviving, with reviving day;
And while yon little bark glides down the bay,
Wafting the stranger on his way again,
Morn's genial influence roused a minstrel grey,*
And sweetly o'er the lake was heard thy strain,
Mixed with the sounding harp, O white-haired Allan-bane!

II.

SONG.

"Not faster yonder rowers' might
Flings from their oars the spray,
Not faster yonder rippling bright,
That tracks the shallop's course in light,
Melts in the lake away,
Than men from memory erase
The benefits of former days;
Then, stranger, go! good speed the while,
Nor think again of the lonely isle.

"High place to thee in royal court,
High place in battled line,
Good hawk and hound for sylvan sport,
Where Beauty sees the brave resort,
The honoured meed be thine!

* The Highland chieftains, at a late period, retained in their service a bard, as a family officer.

True be thy sword, thy friend sincere,
Thy lady constant, kind, and dear,
And lost in love and friendship's smile,
Be memory of the lonely isle.

III.

SONG CONTINUED.

"But if beneath yon southern sky
A plaided stranger roam,
Whose drooping crest and stifled sigh,
And sunken cheek and heavy eye,
Pine for his Highland home;
Then, warrior, then be thine to show
The care that soothes a wanderer's woe;
Remember then thy hap erewhile
A stranger in the lonely isle.

"Or if on life's uncertain main,
Mishap shall mar thy sail;
If faithful, wise, and brave in vain,
Woe, want, and exile thou sustain
Beneath the fickle gale;
Waste not a sigh on fortune changed,
On thankless courts, or friends estranged,
But come where kindred worth shall smile
To greet thee in the lonely isle."

IV.

As died the sounds upon the tide,
The shallop reached the mainland side,
And ere his onward way he took,
The stranger cast a lingering look,
Where easily his eye might reach
The harper on the islet beach,
Reclined against a blighted tree,
As wasted, grey, and worn as he.
To minstrel meditation given,
His reverend brow was raised to heaven,
As from the rising sun to claim
A sparkle of inspiring flame;
His hand, reclined upon the wire,
Seemed watching the awakening fire;
So still he sate, as those who wait
Till judgment speak the doom of fate;
So still, as if no breeze might dare
To lift one lock of hoary hair;
So still as life itself were fled,
In the last sound his harp had sped.

V.

Upon a rock with lichens wild,
Beside him Ellen sate and smiled.

Smiled she to see the stately drake,
Lead forth his fleet upon the lake,
While her vexed spaniel, from the beach,
Bayed at the prize beyond his reach;
Yet tell me then, the maid who knows,
Why deepened on her cheek the rose?—
Forgive, forgive, Fidelity!
Perchance the maiden smiled to see
Yon parting lingerer wave adieu,
And stop and turn to wave anew;
And, lovely ladies, ere your ire
Condemn the heroine of my lyre,
Show me the fair would scorn to spy,
And prize such conquest of her eye!

VI.

While yet he loitered on the spot,
It seemed as Ellen marked him not;
But when he turned him to the glade,
One courteous parting sign she made;
And after, oft that Knight would say,
That not when prize of festal day
Was dealt him by the brightest fair,
Who e'er wore jewel in her hair,
So highly did his bosom swell,
As at that simple mute farewell.
Now with a trusty mountain guide,
And his dark stag-hounds by his side,
He parts—the maid, unconscious still,
Watched him wind slowly round the hill;
But when his stately form was hid,
The guardian in her bosom chid—
"Thy Malcolm! vain and selfish maid!"
'Twas thus upbraiding conscience said,
"Not so had Malcolm idly hung
On the smooth phrase of southern tongue;
Not so had Malcolm strained his eye
Another step than thine to spy."—
"Wake, Allan-bane!" aloud she cried,
To the old minstrel by her side,—
"Arouse thee from thy moody dream!
I'll give thy harp heroic theme,
And warm thee with a noble name;
Pour forth the glory of the Græme."*—
Scarce from her lip the word had rushed,
When deep the conscious maiden blushed;
For of his clan, in hall and bower,
Young Malcolm Græme was held the flower.

* The ancient and powerful family of Graham (which, for metrical reasons, is here spelt after the Scottish pronunciation) held extensive possessions in the counties of Dumbarton and Stirling.

VII.

The minstrel waked his harp—three times
Arose the well-known martial chimes,
And thrice their high heroic pride
In melancholy murmurs died.
"Vainly thou biddest, O noble maid,"
Clasping his withered hands, he said,
"Vainly thou biddest me wake the strain,
Though all unwont to bid in vain.
Alas! than mine a mightier hand
Has tuned my harp, my strings has spanned:
I touched the chords of joy, but low
And mournful answer notes of woe;
And the proud march which victors tread,
Sinks in the wailing for the dead.—
O well for me, if mine alone
That dirge's deep prophetic tone!
If, as my tuneful fathers said,
This harp, which erst Saint Modan* swayed,
Can thus its master's fate foretell,
Then welcome be the minstrel's knell!

VIII.

"But ah! dear lady, thus it sighed
The eve thy sainted mother died;
And such the sounds which, while I strove
To wake a lay of war or love,
Came marring all the festal mirth,
Appalling me who gave them birth,
And, disobedient to my call,
Wailed loud through Bothwell's bannered hall,
Ere Douglasses† to ruin driven,
Were exiled from their native heaven.—
Oh! if yet worse mishap and woe
My master's house must undergo,
Or aught but weal to Ellen fair,
Brood in these accents of despair,
No future bard, sad harp! shall fling
Triumph or rapture from thy string;
One short, one final strain shall flow,
Fraught with unutterable woe,
Then shivered shall thy fragments lie,
Thy master cast him down and die."—

* I am not prepared to show that Saint Modan was a performer on the harp. It was, however, no unsaintly accomplishment, for Saint Dunstan certainly did play upon that instrument, which, retaining, as was natural, a portion of the sanctity attached to its master's character, announced future events by its spontaneous sound.

† The downfall of the Douglasses of the house of Angus, during the reign of James V., is the event alluded to in the text.

IX.

Soothing she answered him, "Assuage,
Mine honoured friend, the fears of age;
All melodies to thee are known,
That harp has rung, or pipe has blown,
In Lowland vale, or Highland glen,
From Tweed to Spey—what marvel, then,
At times, unbidden notes should rise,
Confusedly bound in memory's ties,
Entangling, as they rush along,
The war-march with the funeral song?—
Small ground is now for boding fear;
Obscure, but safe, we rest us here.
My sire, in native virtue great,
Resigning lordship, lands, and state,
Not then to fortune more resigned,
Than yonder oak might give the wind;
The graceful foliage storms may reave,
The noble stem they cannot grieve.
For me,"—she stooped, and, looking round,
Plucked a blue hare-bell from the ground,—
"For me, whose memory scarce conveys
An image of more splendid days,
This little flower, that loves the lea,
May well my simple emblem be;
It drinks heaven's dew as blithe as rose
That in the King's own garden grows,
And when I place it in my hair,
Allan, a bard is bound to swear,
He ne'er saw coronet so fair."
Then playfully the chaplet wild
She wreathed in her dark locks, and smiled.

X.

Her smile, her speech, with winning sway,
Wiled the old harper's mood away;
With such a look as hermits throw
When angels stoop to soothe their woe,
He gazed, till fond regret and pride
Thrilled to a tear, then thus replied:
"Loveliest and best! thou little know'st
The rank, the honours thou hast lost;
O might I live to see thee grace,
In Scotland's court, thy birthright place,
To see my favourite's step advance,
The lightest in the courtly dance,
The cause of every gallant's sigh,
And leading star of every eye,
And theme of every minstrel's art,
The Lady of the Bleeding Heart!"*

* The well-known cognizance of the Douglas family.

XI.

"Fair* dreams are these," the maiden cried,
(Light was her accent, yet she sighed,)
"This mossy rock, my friend, to me
Is worth gay chair and canopy;
Nor would my footstep spring more gay,
In courtly dance than blithe strathspey;†
Nor half so pleased mine ear incline
To royal minstrel's lay as thine;
And then for suitors proud and high,
To bend before my conquering eye,
Thou, flattering bard! thyself wilt say,
That grim Sir Roderick owns its sway.
The Saxon scourge, Clan-Alpine's pride,
The terror of Loch-Lomond's side,
Would at my suit, thou know'st, delay
A Lennox foray—for a day."

XII.

The ancient bard his glee repressed:
"Ill hast thou chosen theme for jest!
For who, through all this western wild,
Named Black Sir Roderick e'er, and smiled?
In Holy-Rood a knight he slew;‡
I saw, when back the dirk he drew,
Courtiers give place before the stride
Of the undaunted homicide;
And since, though outlawed, hath his hand,
Full sternly kept his mountain land.
Who else dared give,—ah! woe the day,
That I such hated truth should say—
The Douglas, like a stricken deer,
Disowned by every noble peer,§
Even the rude refuge we have here?
Alas, this wild marauding chief
Alone might hazard our relief,
And now thy maiden charms expand,
Looks for his guerdon in thy hand;
Full soon may dispensation sought,
To back his suit, from Rome be brought.
Then, though an exile on the hill,
Thy father, as the Douglas, still

* First edition, "Gay."

† A dance in which two persons are engaged, otherwise called a *twasum dance;* denominated from the country of *Strathspey*, in Scotland, probably as having been first used there.—*Jamieson.*

‡ This was by no means an uncommon occurence in the court of Scotland.

§ The exiled state of this powerful race is not exaggerated in this and subsequent passages. The hatred of James against the race of Douglas was so inveterate, that, numerous as their allies were, and disregarded as the regal authority had usually been in similar cases, their nearest friends, even in the most remote parts of Scotland, durst not entertain them, unless under the strictest and closest disguise.

Be held in reverence and fear.
But though to Roderick thou'rt so dear,
That thou mightst guide with silken thread,
Slave of thy will, this chieftain dread;
Yet, O loved maid, thy mirth refrain!
Thy hand is on a lion's mane."

XIII.

"Minstrel," the maid replied, and high
Her father's soul glanced from her eye,
"My debts to Roderick's house I know:
All that a mother could bestow,
To Lady Margaret's care I owe,
Since first an orphan in the wild
She sorrowed o'er her sister's child;
To her brave chieftain son, from ire
Of Scotland's king who shrouds my sire,
A deeper, holier debt is owed;
And, could I pay it with my blood,
Allan! Sir Roderick should command
My blood, my life,—but not my hand.
Rather will Ellen Douglas dwell
A votaress in Maronnan's* cell;
Rather through realms beyond the sea,
Seeking the world's cold charity,
Where ne'er was spoke a Scottish word,
And ne'er the name of Douglas heard,
An outcast pilgrim will she rove,
Than wed the man she cannot love.

XIV.

"Thou shakest, good friend, thy tresses grey—
That pleading look, what can it say
But what I own?—I grant him brave,
But wild as Bracklinn's† thundering wave;
And generous—save vindictive mood,
Or jealous transport chafe his blood:
I grant him true to friendly band,
As his claymore is to his hand:
But O! that very blade of steel
More mercy for a foe would feel:
I grant him liberal, to fling
Among his clan the wealth they bring,
When back by lake and glen they wind,
And in the Lowland leave behind,

* The parish of Kilmaronock, at the eastern extremity of Loch-Lomond, derives its name from a cell or chapel, dedicated to Saint Maronoch, or Marnoch, or Maronnan, about whose sanctity very little is now remembered.

† This is a beautiful cascade made at a place called the Bridge of Bracklinn, by a mountain stream called the Keltie, about a mile from the village of Callander, in Menteith.

Where once some pleasant hamlet stood,
A mass of ashes slaked with blood.
The hand, that for my father fought,
I honour, as his daughter ought;
But can I clasp it reeking red,
From peasants slaughtered in their shed?
No! wildly while his virtues gleam,
They make his passions darker seem,
And flash along his spirit high,
Like lightning o'er the midnight sky.
While yet a child,—and children know,
Instinctive taught, the friend and foe,—
I shuddered at his brow of gloom,
His shadowy plaid, and sable plume;
A maiden grown, I ill could bear
His haughty mien and lordly air;
But, if thou join'st a suitor's claim,
In serious mood, to Roderick's name,
I thrill with anguish! or, if e'er
A Douglas knew the word, with fear.
To change such odious theme were best,—
What think'st thou of our stranger guest?"

XV.

"What think I of him?—woe the while
That brought such wanderer to our isle!
Thy father's battle-brand, of yore
For Tine-man forged by fairy lore,*
What time he leagued, no longer foes,
His Border spears with Hotspur's bows,
Did, self-unscabbarded, foreshow
The footstep of a secret foe.†
If courtly spy, and harboured here,
What may we for the Douglas fear?
What for this island, deemed of old
Clan-Alpine's last and surest hold?
If neither spy nor foe, I pray
What yet may jealous Roderick say?
—Nay, wave not thy disdainful head!
Bethink thee of the discord dread,
That kindled when at Beltane game,
Thou ledst the dance with Malcolm Græme;
Still, though thy sire the peace renewed,
Smoulders in Roderick's breast the feud;

* Archibald, the third earl of Douglas, was so unfortunate in all his enterprises that he acquired the epithet of *Tine-man*, because he *tined*, or lost, his followers in every battle which he fought.

† The ancient warriors, whose hope and confidence rested chiefly in their blades, were accustomed to deduce omens from them, especially from such as were supposed to have been fabricated by enchanted skill, of which we have various instances in the romances and legends of the time.

Beware!—But hark, what sounds are these?
My dull ears catch no faltering breeze
No weeping birch, nor aspens wake,
Nor breath is dimpling in the lake,
Still is the canna's* hoary beard,
Yet, by my minstrel faith, I heard.—
And hark again! some pipe of war
Sends the bold pibroch from afar."—

XVI.

Far up the lengthened lake were spied
Four darkening specks upon the tide,
That, slow enlarging on the view,
Four manned and masted barges grew,
And bearing downwards from Glengyle,
Steered full upon the lonely isle;
The point of Brianchoil they passed,
And, to the windward as they cast,
Against the sun they gave to shine
The bold Sir Roderick's bannered pine.
Nearer and nearer as they bear,
Spears, pikes, and axes flash in air.
Now might you see the tartans brave,
And plaids and plumage dance and wave;
Now see the bonnets sink and rise,
As his tough oar the rower plies;
See, flashing at each sturdy stroke,
The wave ascending into smoke;
See the proud pipers on the bow,
And mark the gaudy streamers flow
From their loud chanters† down, and sweep
The furrowed bosom of the deep,
As, rushing through the lake amain,
They plied the ancient Highland strain.

XVII.

Ever, as on they bore, more loud
And louder rung the pibroch‡ proud.
At first the sounds, by distance tame,
Mellowed along the waters came,
And, lingering long by cape and bay,
Wailed every harsher note away;
Then, bursting bolder on the ear,
The clan's shrill Gathering they could hear;
Those thrilling sounds, that call the might
Of old Clan-Alpine to the fight:
Thick beat the rapid notes, as when
The mustering hundreds shake the glen,

* The cotton-grass. † The *pipe* of the bag-pipe.

‡ The connoisseurs in pipe-music affect to discover in a well-composed pibroch, the imitative sounds of march, conflict, flight, pursuit and all the "current of a heady fight."

And, hurrying at the signal dread,
The battered earth returns their tread;
Then prelude light, of livelier tone,
Expressed their merry marching on,
Ere peal of closing battle rose,
With mingled outcry, shrieks, and blows;
And mimic din of stroke and ward,
As broad-sword upon target jarred;
And groaning pause, ere yet again,
Condensed, the battle yelled amain;
The rapid charge, the rallying shout,
Retreat borne headlong into rout,
And bursts of triumph, to declare
Clan-Alpine's conquest—all were there.
Nor ended thus the strain; but slow,
Sunk in a moan prolonged and low,
And changed the conquering clarion swell,
For wild lament o'er those that fell.

XVIII.

The war-pipes ceased; but lake and hill
Were busy with their echoes still;
And, when they slept, a vocal strain
Bade their hoarse chorus wake again,
While loud a hundred clansmen raise
Their voices in their chieftain's praise.
Each boatman, bending to his oar,
With measured sweep the burthen bore,
In such wild cadence, as the breeze
Makes through December's leafless trees:
The chorus first could Allan know,
"Roderigh Vich Alpine, ho! iro!"
And near, and nearer, as they rowed,
Distinct the martial ditty flowed.

XIX.

BOAT SONG.*

Hail to the chief who in triumph advances!
Honoured and blessed be the ever-green pine!
Long may the tree in his banner that glances,
Flourish and shelter the grace of our line!
Heaven send it happy dew,
Earth lend it sap anew;

* This song is intended as an imitation of the *jorrams*, or boat-songs of the Highlanders, which were usually composed in honour of a favourite chief. They are so adapted as to keep time with the sweep of the oars, and it is easy to distinguish between those intended to be sung to the oars of a galley, where the stroke is lengthened and doubled, as it were, and those which were timed to the rowers of an ordinary boat.

Gaily to bourgeon,* and broadly to grow,
While every Highland glen
Sends our shout back again,
"Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"†

Ours is no sapling, chance-sown by the fountain,
Blooming at Beltane, in winter to fade;
When the whirlwind has stripped every leaf on the mountain,
The more shall Clan-Alpine exult in her shade.
Moored in the rifted rock,
Proof to the tempest's shock,
Firmer he roots him the ruder it blow;
Menteith and Breadalbane, then,
Echo his praise agen,
"Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"

XX.

Proudly our pibroch has thrilled in Glen Fruin,‡
And Banochar's groans to our slogan replied:
Glen Luss and Ross-dhu, they are smoking in ruin,
And the best of Loch-Lomond lie dead on her side.
Widow and Saxon maid
Long shall lament our raid,
Think of Clan-Alpine with fear and with woe;
Lennox and Leven-glen
Shake when they hear agen,
"Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"

Row, vassals, row, for the pride of the Highlands!
Stretch to your oars for the ever-green pine!
O! that the rosebud that graces yon islands,
Were wreathed in a garland around him to twine!
O that some seedling gem
Worthy such noble stem,
Honoured and blessed in their shadow might grow!
Loud should Clan-Alpine then
Ring from her deepmost glen,
"Roderigh Vich Alpine dhu, ho! ieroe!"

* To sprout.

† Besides his ordinary name and surname, which were chiefly used in the intercourse with the Lowlands, every Highland chief had an epithet expressive of his patriarchal dignity as head of his clan, and which was common to all his predecessors and successors, as Pharaoh to the kings of Egypt, or Arsaces to those of Parthia. This name was usually a patronymic expressive of his descent from the founder of the family. But besides this title, which belonged to his office and dignity, the chieftain had usually another, peculiar to himself, which distinguished him from the chieftains of the same race. This was sometimes derived from complexion, as *dhu* or *roy;* sometimes from size, as *beg* or *more;* at other times, from some particular exploit, or from some peculiarity of habit or appearance. The line of the text therefore signifies, "Black Roderick the descendant of Alpine."

‡ A clan battle between the Macgregors and the Colquhouns.

XXI.

With all her joyful female band,
Had Lady Margaret sought the strand.
Loose on the breeze their tresses flew,
And high their snowy arms they threw,
As echoing back, with shrill acclaim
And chorus wild, the chieftain's name;
While, prompt to please, with mother's art
The darling passion of his heart,
The Dame called Ellen to the strand,
To greet her kinsman ere he land:
"Come, loiterer, come! a Douglas thou,
And shun to wreathe a victor's brow?"—
Reluctantly and slow, the maid
The unwelcome summoning obeyed,
And, when a distant bugle rung,
In the mid-path aside she sprung:—
"List, Allan-bane! From mainland cast,
I hear my father's signal-blast.
Be ours," she cried, "the skiff to guide,
And waft him from the mountain-side."
Then, like a sunbeam swift and bright,
She darted to her shallop light,
And, eagerly while Roderick scanned,
For her dear form, his mother's band,
The islet far behind her lay,
And she had landed in the bay.

XXII.

Some feelings are to mortals given,
With less of earth in them than heaven;
And if there be a human tear
From passion's dross refined and clear,
A tear so limpid and so meek,
It would not stain an angel's cheek,
'Tis that which pious fathers shed
Upon a duteous daughter's head!
And as the Douglas to his breast
His darling Ellen closely pressed,
Such holy drops her tresses steeped,
Though 'twas a hero's eye that weeped.
Nor while on Ellen's faltering tongue
Her filial welcomes crowded hung,
Marked she, that fear (affection's proof)
Still held a graceful youth aloof;
No! not till Douglas named his name,
Although the youth was Malcolm Græme.

XXIII.

Allan, with wistful look the while,
Marked Roderick standing on the isle,

His master piteously he eyed,
Then gazed upon the chieftain's pride,
Then dashed, with hasty hand, away
From his dimmed eye the gathering spray;
And Douglas, as his hand he laid
On Malcolm's shoulder, kindly said,
"Canst thou, young friend, no meaning spy
In my poor follower's glistening eye?
I'll tell thee:—he recalls the day,
When in my praise he led the lay
O'er the arched gate of Bothwell proud,
While many a minstrel answered loud,
When Percy's Norman pennon, won
In bloody field, before me shone,
And twice ten knights, the least a name
As mighty as yon chief may claim,
Gracing my pomp, behind me came.
Yet trust me, Malcolm, not so proud
Was I of all that marshailed crowd,
Though the waned crescent owned my might,
And in my train trooped lord and knight,
Though Blantyre hymned her holiest lays,
And Bothwell's bards flung back my praise,
As when this old man's silent tear,
And this poor maid's affection dear,
A welcome give more kind and true
Than aught my better fortunes knew.
Forgive, my friend, a father's boast;
O! it out-beggars all I lost!"

XXIV.

Delightful praise!—like summer rose,
That brighter in the dew-drop glows,
The bashful maiden's cheek appeared,
For Douglas spoke, and Malcolm heard.
The flush of shame-faced joy to hide,
The hounds, the hawk, her cares divide;
The loved caresses of the maid
The dogs with crouch and whimper paid;
And, at her whistle, on her hand
The falcon took his favourite stand,
Closed his dark wing, relaxed his eye,
Nor, though unhooded, sought to fly.
And trust, while in such guise she stood,
Like fabled Goddess of the Wood,
That if a father's partial thought
O'erweighed her worth and beauty aught,
Well might the lover's judgment fail,
To balance with a juster scale;
For with each secret glance he stole,
The fond enthusiast sent his soul.

XXV.

Of stature fair, and slender frame,
But firmly knit, was Malcolm Græme.
The belted plaid and tartan hose
Did ne'er more graceful limbs disclose;
His flaxen hair, of sunny hue,
Curled closely round his bonnet blue;
Trained to the chase, his eagle eye
The ptarmigan in snow could spy;
Each pass, by mountain, lake, and heath,
He knew, through Lennox and Menteith;
Vain was the bound of dark-brown doe,
When Malcolm bent his sounding bow,
And scarce that doe, though winged with fear,
Outstripped in speed the mountaineer;
Right up Ben-Lomond could he press,
And not a sob his toil confess;
His form accorded with a mind
Lively and ardent, frank and kind;
A blither heart, till Ellen came,
Did never love nor sorrow tame;
It danced as lightsome in his breast,
As played the feather on his crest.
Yet friends, who nearest knew the youth,
His scorn of wrong, his zeal for truth,
And bards, who saw his features bold,
When kindled by the tales of old,
Said, were that youth to manhood grown,
Not long should Roderick Dhu's renown
Be foremost voiced by mountain fame,
But quail to that of Malcolm Græme.

XXVI.

Now back they wend their watery way,
And "O my sire!" did Ellen say,
"Why urge thy chase so far astray?
And why so late returned? And why"—
The rest was in her speaking eye.
"My child, the chase I follow far,
'Tis mimicry of noble war:
And with that gallant pastime reft
Were all of Douglas I have left.
I met young Malcolm as I strayed
Far eastward, in Glenfinlas' shade,
Nor strayed I safe; for, all around,
Hunters and horsemen scoured the ground.
This youth, though still a royal ward,
Risked life and land to be my guard,
And through the passes of the wood
Guided my steps not unpursued,

And Roderick shall his welcome make,
Despite old spleen, for Douglas' sake.
Then must he seek Strath-Endrick glen,
Nor peril aught for me agen."—

XXVII.

Sir Roderick, who to meet them came,
Reddened at sight of Malcolm Græme,
Yet, nor in action, word, or eye,
Failed aught in hospitality.
In talk and sport they whiled away
The morning of that summer day;
But at high noon a courier light
Held secret parley with the knight,
Whose moody aspect soon declared
That evil were the news he heard.
Deep thought seemed toiling in his head;
Yet was the evening banquet made,
Ere he assembled round the flame,
His mother, Douglas, and the Græme,
And Ellen too; then cast around
His eyes, then fixed them on the ground,
As studying-phrase that might avail
Best to convey unpleasant tale.
Long with his dagger's hilt he played,
Then raised his haughty head, and said:—

XXVIII.

"Short be my speech;—nor time affords,
Nor my plain temper, glozing words.
Kinsman and father—if such name
Douglas vouchsafe to Roderick's claim;
Mine honoured mother; Ellen—why,
My cousin, turn away thine eye?—
And Græme, in whom I hope to know
Full soon a noble friend or foe,
When age shall give thee thy command
And leading in thy native land,—
List all!—The King's vindictive pride
Boasts to have tamed the Border-side,*
Where chiefs, with hound and hawk who came
To share their monarch's sylvan game,
Themselves in bloody toils were snared,
And when the banquet they prepared,
And wide their loyal portals flung,
O'er their own gateway struggling hung.

* In 1529 James V. made a convention at Edinburgh, for the purpose of considering the best mode of quelling the Border robbers, who, during the licence of his minority, and the troubles which followed, had committed many exorbitances. An expedition was accordingly formed, and many of the most noted freebooters were seized and executed.

Loud cries their blood from Meggat's mead,
From Yarrow braes, and banks of Tweed,
Where the lone streams of Ettricke glide,
And from the silver Teviot's side;
The dales, where martial clans did ride,
Are now one sheep-walk waste and wide.
This tyrant of the Scottish throne,
So faithless and so ruthless known,
Now hither comes; his end the same,
The same pretext of sylvan game.
What grace for Highland chiefs judge ye,
By fate of Border chivalry.*
Yet more; amid Glenfinlas green,
Douglas, thy stately form was seen.
This by espial sure I know:
Your counsel in the streight I show."—

XXIX.

Ellen and Margaret fearfully
Sought comfort in each other's eye.
Then turned their ghastly look, each one,
This to her sire, that to her son.
The hasty colour went and came
In the bold cheek of Malcolm Græme;
But, from his glance it well appeared,
'Twas but for Ellen that he feared;
While sorrowful, but undismayed,
The Douglas thus his counsel said:
"Brave Roderick, though the tempest roar,
It may but thunder and pass o'er;
Nor will I here remain an hour,
To draw the lightning on thy bower,
For well thou know'st, at this grey head
The royal bolt were fiercest sped.
For thee, who, at thy King's command,
Canst aid him with a gallant band,
Submission, homage, humbled pride,
Shall turn the monarch's wrath aside.
Poor remnants of the Bleeding Heart,
Ellen and I will seek, apart,
The refuge of some forest cell;
There, like the hunted quarry, dwell,
Till, on the mountain and the moor,
The stern pursuit be passed and o'er."—

XXX.

"No, by mine honour!" Roderick said,
"So help me Heaven, and my good blade!
No, never! Blasted be yon pine,
My father's ancient crest, and mine,

* James was in fact, equally attentive to restrain rapine and feudal oppression in every part of his dominions.—See Pitscottie, p. 136.

If from its shade in danger part
The lineage of the Bleeding Heart!
Hear my blunt speech: grant me this maid
To wife, thy counsel to mine aid;
To Douglas, leagued with Roderick Dhu,
Will friends and allies flock enow;
Like cause of doubt, distrust and grief,
Will bind to us each western chief.
When the loud pipes my bridal tell,
The Links of Forth shall hear the knell,
The guards shall start in Stirling's porch;
And when I light the nuptial torch,
A thousand villages in flames,
Shall scare the slumbers of King James!
—Nay, Ellen, blench not thus away,
And, mother, cease these signs I pray;
I meant not all my heat might say.—
Small need of inroad, or of fight,
When the sage Douglas may unite
Each mountain clan from friendly band,
To guard the passes of their land,
Till the foiled King, from pathless glen,
Shall bootless turn him home agen."—

XXXI.

There are who have, at midnight hour,
In slumber scaled a dizzy tower,
And, on the verge that beetled o'er
The ocean-tide's incessant roar,
Dreamed calmly out their dangerous dream
Till wakened by the morning beam;
When, dazzled by the eastern glow,
Such startler cast his glance below,
And saw unmeasured depth around,
And heard unintermitted sound,
And thought the battled fence so frail,
It waved like cobweb in the gale;
Amid his senses' giddy wheel,
Did he not desperate impulse feel,
Headlong to plunge himself below,
And meet the worst his fears foreshow?—
Thus, Ellen, dizzy and astound,
As sudden ruin yawned around,
By crossing terrors wildly tossed,
Still for the Douglas fearing most,
Could scarce the desperate thought withstand,
To buy his safety with her hand.

XXXII.

Such purpose dread could Malcolm spy
In Ellen's quivering lip and eye,
And eager rose to speak—but ere
His tongue could hurry forth his fear,

Had Douglas marked the hectic strife,
Where death seemed combating with life;
For to her cheek, in feverish flood,
One instant rushed the throbbing blood,
Then ebbing back, with sudden sway,
Left its domain as wan as clay.
"Roderick, enough! enough!" he cried.
"My daughter cannot be thy bride;
Not that the blush too wooer dear,
Nor paleness that of maiden fear.
It may not be—forgive her, chief,
Nor hazard aught for our relief.
Against his sovereign, Douglas ne'er
Will level a rebellious spear.
'Twas I that taught his youthful hand
To rein a steed and wield a brand.
I see him yet, the princely boy!
Not Ellen more my pride and joy;
I love him still, despite my wrongs,
By hasty wrath, and slanderous tongues.
O seek the grace you well may find,
Without a cause to mine combined."

XXXIII.

Twice through the hall the Chieftain strode,
The waving of his tartans broad,
And darkened brow, where wounded pride
With ire and disappointment vied,
Seemed, by the torch's gloomy light,
Like the ill Dæmon of the night,
Stooping his pinions' shadowy sway
Upon the nighted pilgrim's way:
But, unrequited Love! thy dart
Plunged deepest its envenomed smart,
And Roderick, with thine anguish stung,
At length the hand of Douglas wrung,
While eyes, that mocked at tears before,
With bitter drops were running o'er.
The death-pangs of long-cherished hope
Scarce in that ample breast had scope,
But, struggling with his spirit proud,
Convulsive heaved its chequered shroud,
While every sob—so mute were all—
Was heard distinctly through the hall.
The son's despair, the mother's look,
Ill might the gentle Ellen brook;
She rose, and to her side there came,
To aid her parting steps, the Græme.

XXXIV.

Then Roderick from the Douglas broke—
As flashes flame through sable smoke,

Kindling its wreaths, long, dark, and low,
To one broad blaze of ruddy glow,
So the deep anguish of despair
Burst, in fierce jealousy, to air.
With stalwart grasp his hand he laid
On Malcolm's breast and belted plaid:
"Back, beardless boy!" he sternly said,
"Back, minion! hold'st thou thus at nought
The lesson I so lately taught?
This roof, the Douglas, and that maid,
Thank thou for punishment delayed."
Eager as greyhound on his game,
Fiercely with Roderick grappled Græme.
"Perish my name, if aught afford
Its chieftain safety, save his sword!"
Thus as they strove, their desperate hand
Griped to the dagger or the brand,
And death had been—but Douglas rose,
And thrust between the struggling foes
His giant strength:—"Chieftains, forego!
I hold the first who strikes, my foe.*
Madmen, forbear your frantic jar!
What! is the Douglas fallen so far,
His daughter's hand is deemed the spoil
Of such dishonourable broil!"
Sullen and slowly, they unclasp,
As struck with shame, their desperate grasp,
And each upon his rival glared,
With foot advanced, and blade half-bared.

XXXV.

Ere yet the brands aloft were flung,
Margaret on Roderick's mantle hung,
And Malcolm heard his Ellen's scream,
As faltered through terrific dream.
Then Roderick plunged in sheath his sword,
And veiled his wrath in scornful word.
"Rest safe till morning; pity 'twere
Such cheek should feel the midnight air!
Then mayst thou to James Stuart tell,
Roderick will keep the lake and fell,
Nor lackey, with his free-born clan,
The pageant pomp of earthly man.
More would he of Clan-Alpine know,
Thou canst our strength and passes show.—
Malise, what ho?"—his henchman† came:
"Give our safe-conduct to the Græme."

* The author has to apologize for the inadvertent appropriation of a whole line from the tragedy of Douglas:

"I hold the first who strikes, my foe."

† This officer was a sort of secretary, who was expected to be ready on all occasions to hazard his life for his master. At drinking-bouts

Young Malcolm answered, calm and bold,
"Fear nothing for thy favourite hold.
The spot, an angel deigned to grace,
Is blessed, though robbers haunt the place;
Thy churlish courtesy for those
Reserve, who fear to be thy foes.
As safe to me the mountain way
At midnight, as in blaze of day,
Though, with his boldest at his back,
Even Roderick Dhu beset the track.—
Brave Douglas,—lovely Ellen,—nay,
Nought here of parting will I say.
Earth does not hold a lonesome glen,
So secret, but we meet agen.—
Chieftain! we too shall find an hour,"—
He said, and left the sylvan bower.

XXXVI.

Old Allan followed to the strand,
(Such was the Douglas's command,)
And anxious told, how, on the morn,
The stern Sir Roderick deep had sworn,
The Fiery Cross should circle o'er
Dale, glen, and valley, down, and moor.
Much were the peril to the Græme,
From those who to the signal came;
Far up the lake 'twere safest land,
Himself would row him to the strand.
He gave his counsel to the wind,
While Malcolm did, unheeding, bind,
Round dirk and pouch and broad-sword rolled,
His ample plaid in tightened fold,
And stripped his limbs to such array
As best might suit the watery way.

XXXVII.

Then spoke abrupt: "Farewell to thee,
Pattern of old fidelity!"
The minstrel's hand he kindly pressed,—
"O! could I point a place of rest!
My sovereign holds in ward my land,
My uncle leads my vassal band;
To tame his foes, his friends to aid,
Poor Malcolm has but heart and blade:
Yet, if there be one faithful Græme,
Who loves the Chieftain of his name,
Not long shall honoured Douglas dwell,
Like hunted stag, in mountain cell;
Nor, ere yon pride-swollen robber dare,—
I may not give the rest to air!—

he stood behind his seat, at his haunch, whence the title is derived, and watched the conversation, to see if any one offended his patron.

Tell Roderick Dhu, I owed him nought,
Not the poor service of a boat,
To waft me to yon mountain-side."
Then plunged he in the flashing tide.
Bold o'er the flood his head he bore,
And stoutly steered him from the shore;
And Allan strained his anxious eye,
Far 'mid the lake his form to spy.
Darkening across each puny wave,
To which the moon her silver gave,
Fast as the cormorant could skim,
The swimmer plied each active limb;
Then, landing in the moonlight dell,
Loud shouted of his weal to tell.
The minstrel heard the far halloo,
And joyful from the shore withdrew.

CANTO THIRD.

THE GATHERING.

I.

TIME rolls his ceaseless course. The race of yore
Who danced our infancy upon their knee,
And told our marvelling boyhood legends store,
Of their strange ventures happed by land or sea,
How are they blotted from the things that be!
How few, all weak and withered of their force,
Wait, on the verge of dark eternity,
Like stranded wrecks, the tide returning hoarse,
To sweep them from our sight! Time rolls his ceaseless course.

Yet live there still who can remember well,
How, when a mountain chief his bugle blew,
Both field and forest, dingle, cliff, and dell,
And solitary heath, the singal knew;
And fast the faithful clan around him drew,
What time the warning note was keenly wound,
What time aloft their kindred banner flew,
While clamorous war-pipes yelled the gathering sound,
And while the Fiery Cross glanced, like a meteor, round.*

* When a chieftain designed to summon his clan, upon any sudden or important emergency, he slew a goat, and making a cross of any light wood, seared its extremities in the fire, and extinguished them in the blood of the animal. This was called the *Fiery Cross*, also *Crean Tarigh*, or the *Cross of Shame*, because disobedience to what

II.

The summer dawn's reflected hue
To purple changed Loch-Katrine blue;
Mildly and soft the western breeze
Just kissed the lake, just stirred the trees,
And the pleased lake, like maiden coy,
Trembled, but dimpled not for joy;
The mountain-shadows on her breast
Were neither broken nor at rest;
In bright uncertainty they lie,
Like future joys to Fancy's eye.
The water-lily to the light
Her chalice reared of silver bright;
The doe awoke, and to the lawn
Begemmed with dew-drops, led her fawn;
The grey mist left the mountain-side,
The torrent showed its glistening pride,
Invisible in flecked* sky,
The lark sent down her revelry;
The blackbird and the speckled thrush
Good-morrow gave from brake and bush;
In answer cooed the cushat dove,
Her notes of peace, and rest, and love.

III.

No thought of peace, no thought of rest,
Assuaged the storm in Roderick's breast.
With sheathed broad-sword in his hand,
Abrupt he paced the islet strand,
And eyed the rising sun, and laid
His hand on his impatient blade.
Beneath a rock, his vassals' care
Was prompt the ritual to prepare,
With deep and deathful meaning fraught;
For such Antiquity had taught
Was preface meet, ere yet abroad
The Cross of Fire should take its road.

the symbol implied, inferred infamy. It was delivered to a swift and trusty messenger, who ran full speed with it to the next hamlet, where he presented it to the principal person, with a single word, implying the place of rendezvous. He who received the symbol was bound to send it forwards with equal despatch to the next village; and thus it passed with incredible celerity through all the district which owed allegiance to the chief, and also among his allies and neighbours, if the danger was common to them. At sight of the Fiery Cross, every man, from sixteen years old to sixty, capable of bearing arms, was obliged instantly to repair, in his best arms and accoutrements, to the place of rendezvous. He who failed to appear suffered the extremities of fire and sword, which were emblematically denounced to the disobedient by the bloody and burnt marks upon this warlike signal. During the civil war of 1745-6, the Fiery Cross often made its circuit; and upon one occasion it passed through the whole district of Bredalbane, a tract of thirty-two miles, in three hours.

* Vaulted.

The shrinking band stood oft aghast
At the impatient glance he cast;—
Such glance the mountain eagle threw,
As from the cliffs of Ben-venue,
She spread her dark sails on the wind,
And high in middle heaven reclined,
With her broad shadow on the lake,
Silenced the warblers of the brake.

IV.

A heap of withered boughs was piled,
Of juniper and rowan wild,
Mingled with shivers from the oak,
Rent by the lightning's recent stroke.
Brian the Hermit by it stood,
Barefooted, in his frock and hood.
His grisled beard and matted hair
Obscured a visage of despair;
His naked arms and legs, seamed o'er,
The scars of frantic penance bore.
That Monk, of savage form and face,
The impending danger of his race
Had drawn from deepest solitude,
Far in Benharrow's bosom rude.
Not his the mien of Christian priest
But Druid's, from the grave released,
Whose hardened heart and eye might brook
On human sacrifice to look.
And much, 'twas said of heathen lore
Mixed in the charms he muttered o'er;
The hallowed creed gave only worse
And deadlier emphasis of curse.
No peasant sought that Hermit's* prayer,
His cave the pilgrim shunned with care;
The eager huntsman knew his bound,
And in mid chase called off his hound;
Or if, in lonely glen or strath,†
The desert-dweller met his path,
He prayed, and signed the cross between,
While terror took devotion's mien.

V.

Of Brian's birth strange tales were told.‡
His mother watched a midnight fold,

* The state of religion in the middle ages afforded considerable facilities for those whose mode of life excluded them from regular worship, to secure, nevertheless, the ghostly assistance of confessors perfectly willing to adapt the nature of their doctrine to the necessities and peculiar circumstances of their flock. Robin Hood, it is well known, had his celebrated domestic chaplain, Friar Tuck. And that same curtal friar was probably matched in manners and appearance by the ghostly fathers of the Tynedale robbers, frequently mentioned by old writers.

† A valley of considerable length. ‡ This is an old legend.

Built deep within a dreary glen,
Where scattered lay the bones of men,
In some forgotten battle slain,
And bleached by drifting wind and rain.
It might have tamed a warrior's heart,
To view such mockery of his art:
The knot-grass fettered there the hand
Which once could burst an iron band;
Beneath the broad and ample bone,
That bucklered heart to fear unknown,
A feeble and a timorous guest,
The fieldfare framed her lowly nest;
There the slow blind-worm left his slime
On the fleet limbs that mocked at time;
And there, too, lay the leader's skull,
Still wreathed with chaplet flushed and full,
For heath-bell, with her purple bloom,
Supplied the bonnet and the plume.
All night, in this sad glen, the maid
Sate shrouded in her mantle's shade:
—She said, no shepherd sought her side,
No hunter's hand her snood untied,
Yet ne'er again to braid her hair
The virgin snood* did Alice wear;
Gone was her maiden glee and sport,
Her maiden girdle all too short,
Nor sought she, from that fatal night,
Or holy church or blessèd rite,
But locked her secret in her breast,
And died in travail, unconfessed.

VI.

Alone, among his young compeers,
Was Brian from his infant years;
A moody and heart-broken boy,
Estranged from sympathy and joy,
Bearing each taunt which careless tongue
On his mysterious lineage flung.
Whole nights he spent by moonlight pale,
To wood and stream his hap to wail.
Till, frantic, he as truth received
What of his birth the crowd believed,
And sought, in mist and meteor fire,
To meet and know his Phantom Sire!
In vain to soothe his wayward fate,
The cloister oped her pitying gate;

* The *snood*, or riband, with which a Scottish lass braided her hair, had an emblematical signification, and applied to her maiden character. It was exchanged for the *curch*, *toy*, or *coif*, when she passed, by marriage, into the matron state. But if the damsel was so unfortunate as to lose pretensions to the name of maiden, without gaining a right to that of matron, she was neither permitted to use the snood, nor advanced to the graver dignity of the curch.

In vain, the learning of the age
Unclasped the sable-lettered page;
Even in its treasures he could find
Food for the fever of his mind.
Eager he read whatever tells
Of magic, cabala, and spells,
And every dark pursuit allied
To curious and presumptuous pride,
Till, with fired brain and nerves o'erstrung,
And heart with mystic horrors wrung,
Desperate he sought Benharrow's den,
And hid him from the haunts of men.*

VII.

The desert gave him visions wild,
Such as might suit the Spectre's child:
Where with black cliffs the torrents toil,
He watched the wheeling eddies boil,
Till, from their foam, his dazzled eyes
Beheld the river demon† rise;
The mountain mist took form and limb
Of noontide hag,‡ or goblin grim;
The midnight wind came wild and dread,
Swelled with the voices of the dead;
Far on the future battle-heath
His eye beheld the ranks of death;
Thus the lone Seer, from mankind hurled,
Shaped forth a disembodied world.
One lingering sympathy of mind
Still bound him to the mortal kind;
The only parent he could claim
Of ancient Alpine's lineage came.
Late had he heard, in prophet's dream,
The fatal Ben-shie's§ boding scream;

* In adopting the legend concerning the birth of the founder of the church of Kilmallie, the author has endeavoured to trace the effects which such a belief was likely to produce, in a barbarous age, on the person to whom it related. It seems likely that he must have become a fanatic or an impostor, or that mixture of both which forms a more frequent character than either of them, as existing separately.

† The river demon, or river horse, for it is that form which he commonly assumes, is the Kelpy of the Lowlands, an evil and malicious spirit, delighting to forebode and to witness calamity. He frequents most Highland lakes and rivers; and one of his most memorable exploits was performed upon the banks of Loch Vennachar, in the very district which forms the scene of our action: it consisted in the destruction of a funeral procession, with all its attendants.

‡ The "noontide hag," called in Gaelic *Glas-lich*, a tall, emaciated, gigantic female figure, is supposed in particular to haunt the district of Knoidart.

§ Most great families in the Highlands were supposed to have a tutelar, or rather a domestic spirit, attached to them, who took an interest in their prosperity, and intimated, by its wailings, any approaching disaster. The Ben Schie implies the head or chief of the

Sounds, too, had come in midnight blast,
Of charging steeds, careering fast
Along Benharrow's shingly side,
Where mortal horseman ne'er might ride;
The thunderbolt had split the pine,—
All augured ill to Alpine's line.
He girt his loins and came to show
The signals of impending woe,
And now stood prompt to bless or ban,
As bade the Chieftain of his clan.

VIII.

'Twas all prepared—and from the rock,
A goat, the patriarch of the flock,
Before the kindling pile was laid,
And pierced by Roderick's ready blade.
Patient the sickening victim eyed
The life-blood ebb in crimson tide,
Down his clogged beard and shaggy limb,
Till darkness glazed his eyeballs dim.
The grisly priest, with murmuring prayer
A slender crosslet framed with care,
A cubit's length in measure due;
The shaft and limbs were rods of yew,
Whose parents in Inch-Cailliach* wave
Their shadows o'er Clan-Alpine's grave,
And, answering Lomond's breezes deep,
Soothe many a chieftain's endless sleep.
The Cross, thus formed, he held on high,
With wasted hand and haggard eye,
And strange and mingled feelings woke,
While his anathema he spoke.

IX.

"Woe to the clansman, who shall view
This symbol of sepulchral yew,
Forgetful that its branches grew
Where weep the heavens their holiest dew
On Alpine's dwelling low!
Deserter of his Chieftain's trust,
He ne'er shall mingle with their dust,
But from his sires and kindred thrust,
Each clansman's execration just
Shall doom him wrath and woe,"

fairies, whose lamentations were often supposed to precede the death of a chieftain of particular families. When she is visible, it is in the form of an old woman, with a blue mantle and streaming hair.

* A presage of the kind alluded to in the text is still believed to announce death to the ancient Highland family of M'Lean of Lochbuy. The spirit of an ancestor slain in battle is heard to gallop along a stony bank, and then to ride thrice around the family residence, ringing his fairy bridle, and thus intimating the approaching calamity.

† The Isle of Nuns, or of Old Women, is a most beautiful island at the lower extremity of Loch-Lomond.

He paused;—the word the vassals took,
With forward step and fiery look,
On high their naked brands they shook,
Their clattering targets wildly strook;
And first in murmur low,
Then like the billow in his course,
That far to seaward finds his source,
And flings to shore his mustered force,
Burst, with loud roar, their answer hoarse,
"Woe to the traitor, woe!"
Ben-an's grey scalp the accents knew,
The joyous wolf from covert drew
The exulting eagle screamed afar,—
They knew the voice of Alpine's war.

X.

The shout was hushed on lake and fell,
The Monk resumed his muttered spell.
Dismal and low its accents came,
The while he scathed the Cross with flame;
And the few words that reached the air,
Although the holiest name was there,
Had more of blasphemy than prayer.
But when he shook above the crowd
Its kindled points, he spoke aloud:—
"Woe to the wretch, who fails to rear
At this dread sign the ready spear!
For, as the flames this symbol sear,
His home, the refuge of his fear,
A kindred fate shall know;
Far o'er its roof the volumed flame
Clan-Alpine's vengeance shall proclaim,
While maids and matrons on his name
Shall call down wretchedness and shame,
And infamy and woe."
Then rose the cry of females, shrill,
As goss-hawk's whistle on the hill,
Denouncing misery and ill,
Mingled with childhood's babbling trill,
Of curses stammered slow;
Answering, with imprecation dread,
"Sunk be his home in embers red!
And cursèd be the meanest shed
That e'er shall hide the houseless head
We doom to want and woe!"
A sharp and shrieking echo gave,
Coir-Uriskin, thy goblet cave!
And the grey pass where birches wave,
On Beala-nam-bo.

XI.

Then deeper paused the priest anew,
And hard his labouring breath he drew,

While, with set teeth and clenchèd hand,
And eyes that glowed like fiery brand,
He meditated curse more dread,
And deadlier, on the clansman's head,
Who, summoned to his Chieftain's aid,
The signal saw and disobeyed.
The crosslet's points of sparkling wood
He quenched among the bubbling blood,
And as again the sign he reared,
Hollow and hoarse his voice was heard:
"When flits this Cross from man to man,
Vich-Alpine's summons to his clan,
Burst be the ear that fails to heed!
Palsied the foot that shuns to speed!
May ravens tear the careless eyes;
Wolves make the coward heart their prize!
As sinks that blood-stream in the earth,
So may his heart's-blood drench his hearth!
As dies in hissing gore the spark,
Quench thou his light, Destruction dark!
And be the grace to him denied,
Bought by this sign to all beside!"—
He ceased: no echo gave agen
The murmur of the deep Amen.

XII.

Then Roderick, with impatient look,
From Brian's hand the symbol took:
"Speed, Malise, speed!" he said, and gave
The crosslet to his henchman brave.
"The muster-place be Lanrick mead—
Instant the time—speed, Malise, speed!"
Like heath-bird, when the hawks pursue,
A barge across Loch-Katrine flew;
High stood the henchman on the prow,
So rapidly the bargemen row,
The bubbles, where they launched the boat,
Were all unbroken and afloat,
Dancing in foam and ripple still,
When it had neared the mainland hill;
And from the silver beach's side
Still was the prow three fathom wide,
When lightly bounded to the land
The messenger of blood and brand.

XIII.

Speed, Malise, speed! the dun deer's hide*
On fleeter foot was never tied.

* The present *brogue* of the Highlanders is made of half-dried leather, with holes to admit and let out the water; for walking the moors dry-shod is a matter altogether out of the question. The

Speed, Malise, speed! such cause of haste
Thine active sinews never braced.
Bend 'gainst the steepy hill thy breast,
Burst down like torrent from its crest;
With short and springing footstep pass
The trembling bog and false morass;
Across the brook like roebuck bound,
And thread the brake like questing* hound;
The crag is high, the scaur is deep,
Yet shrink not from the desperate leap;
Parched are thy burning lips and brow,
Yet by the fountain pause not now;
Herald of battle, fate, and fear,
Stretch onward in thy fleet career!
The wounded hind thou track'st not now,
Pursuest not maid through greenwood bough,
Nor pliest thou now thy flying pace
With rivals in the mountain race;
But danger, death, and warrior deed,
Are in thy course—speed, Malise, speed!

XIV.

Fast as the fatal symbol flies,
In arms the huts and hamlets rise;
From winding glen, from upland brown,
They poured each hardy tenant down.
Nor slacked the messenger his pace;
He showed the sign, he named the place
And, pressing forward like the wind,
Left clamour and surprise behind.
The fisherman forsook the strand,
The swarthy smith took dirk and brand,
With changèd cheer, the mower blithe
Left in the half-cut swathe his scythe;
The herds without a keeper strayed,
The plough was in mid-furrow stayed,
The falconer tossed his hawk away,
The hunter left the stag at bay;
Prompt at the signal of alarms,
Each son of Alpine rushed to arms;
So swept the tumult and affray
Along the margin of Achray.
Alas, thou lovely lake! that e'er
Thy banks should echo sounds of fear!
The rocks, the bosky thickets, sleep
So stilly on thy bosom deep,
The lark's blithe carol from the cloud,
Seems for the scene too gaily loud.

ancient buskin was still ruder, being made of undressed deer's hide, with the hair outwards; a circumstance which procured the Highlanders the well-known epithet of *Red-shanks*.

* Baying.

XV.

Speed, Malise, speed! the lake is passed,
Duncraggan's huts appear at last,
And peep, like moss-grown rocks, half seen,
Half hidden in the copse so green;
There mayst thou rest, thy labour done,
Their lord shall speed the signal on.—
As stoops the hawk upon his prey,
The henchman shot him down the way.
What woeful accents load the gale!
The funeral yell, the female wail!
A gallant hunter's sport is o'er,
A valiant warrior fights no more.
Who, in the battle or the chase,
At Roderick's side shall fill his place?—
Within the hall, where torches' ray
Supplies the excluded beams of day,
Lies Duncan on his lowly bier,
And o'er him streams his widow's tear.
His stripling son stands mournful by,
His youngest weeps, but knows not why;
The village maids and matrons round
The dismal coronach* resound.

XVI.

CORONACH.

He is gone on the mountain,
He is lost to the forest,
Like a summer-dried fountain,
When our need was the sorest.
The font, reappearing,
From the rain-drops shall borrow,
But to us comes no cheering,
To Duncan no morrow!

The hand of the reaper
Takes the ears that are hoary,
But the voice of the weeper
Wails manhood in glory;
The autumn winds rushing
Waft the leaves that are scarest,
But our flower was in flushing,
When blighting was nearest.

Fleet foot on the correi,†
Sage counsel in cumber,
Red hand in the foray,
How sound is thy slumber!

* The *coronach* of the Highlanders, like the *Ululatus* of the Romans, and the Ululoo of the Irish, was a wild expression of lamentation, poured forth by the mourners over the body of a departed friend. When the words were articulate they expressed the praises of the deceased, and the loss the clan would sustain by his death.

† Or *corri*. The hollow side of the hill, where game usually lies.

Like the dew on the mountain,
Like the foam on the river,
Like the bubble on the fountain,
Thou art gone, and for ever!

XVII.

See Stumah,* who, the bier beside,
His master's corpse with wonder eyed.
Poor Stumah! whom his least halloo
Could send like lightning o'er the dew,
Bristles his crest, and points his ears,
As if some stranger step he hears.
'Tis not a mourner's muffled tread,
Who comes to sorrow o'er the dead,
But headlong haste, or deadly fear,
Urge the precipitate career.
All stand aghast:—unheeding all
The henchman bursts into the hall;
Before the dead man's bier he stood,
Held forth the Cross besmeared with blood:
"The muster-place is Lanrick mead;
Speed forth the signal! clansmen, speed!"

XVIII.

Angus, the heir of Duncan's line,
Sprung forth and seized the fatal sign.
In haste the stripling to his side
His father's dirk and broad-sword tied;
But when he saw his mother's eye
Watch him in speechless agony,
Back to her opened arms he flew,
Pressed to her lips a fond adieu.
"Alas!" she sobbed—"and yet, be gone,
And speed thee forth, like Duncan's son!"
One look he cast upon the bier,
Dashed from his eye the gathering tear,
Breathed deep to clear his labouring breast,
And tossed aloft his bonnet crest,
Then, like the high-bred colt when freed
First he essays his fire and speed,
He vanished, and o'er moor and moss
Sped forward with the Fiery Cross.
Suspended was the widow's tear,
While yet his footsteps she could hear;
And when she marked the henchman's eye
Wet with unwonted sympathy,
"Kinsman," she said, "his race is run,
That should have sped thine errand on;
The oak has fallen—the sapling bough
Is all Duncraggan's shelter now.

* *i. e.* faithful. The name of a dog.

Yet trust I well, his duty done,
The orphan's God will guard my son.
And you, in many a danger true,
At Duncan's hest your blades that drew,
To arms, and guard that orphan's head;
Let babes and women wail the dead."
Then weapon-clang, and martial call,
Resounded through the funeral hall,
While from the walls the attendant band
Snatched sword and targe, with hurried hand;
And short and flitting energy
Glanced from the mourner's sunken eye,
As if the sounds to warrior dear
Might rouse her Duncan from his bier:
But faded soon that borrowed force;
Grief claimed his right, and tears their course.

XIX.

Benledi saw the Cross of Fire,
It glanced like lightning up Strath-Ire.
O'er dale and hill the summons flew,
Not rest nor pause young Angus knew;
The tear that gathered in his eye,
He left the mountain breeze to dry;
Until, where Teith's young waters roll,
Betwixt him and a wooded knoll,
That graced the sable strath with green,
The chapel of Saint Bride was seen.
Swollen was the stream, remote the bridge,
But Angus paused not on the edge;
Though the dark waves danced dizzily,
Though reeled his sympathetic eye,
He dashed amid the torrent's roar:
His right hand high the crosslet bore,
His left the pole-axe grasped, to guide
And stay his footing in the tide.
He stumbled twice—the foam splashed high,
With hoarser swell the stream raced by;
And had he fallen,—for ever there,
Farewell Duncraggan's orphan heir!
But still, as if in parting life,
Firmer he grasped the Cross of strife,
Until the opposing bank he gained,
And up the chapel pathway strained.

XX.

A blithesome rout, that morning tide,
Had sought the chapel of Saint Bride.
Her troth Tombea's Mary gave
To Norman, heir of Armandave,
And, issuing from the Gothic arch,
The bridal now resumed their march.

In rude, but glad procession, came
Bonneted sire and coif-clad dame;
And plaided youth, with jest and jeer,
Which snooded maiden would not hear;
And children, that, unwitting why,
Lent the gay shout their shrilly cry;
And minstrels, that in measures vied
Before the young and bonny bride,
Whose downcast eye and cheek disclose
The tear and blush of morning rose.
With virgin step, and bashful hand,
She held the kerchief's snowy band;
The gallant bridegroom, by her side,
Beheld his prize with victor's pride,
And the glad mother in her ear
Was closely whispering word of cheer.

XXI.

Who meets them at the churchyard gate?
The messenger of fear and fate!
Haste in his hurried accent lies,
And grief is swimming in his eyes.
All dripping from the recent flood,
Panting and travel-soiled he stood,
The fatal sign of fire and sword
Held forth, and spoke the appointed word
"The muster-place is Lanrick mead;
Speed forth the signal! Norman, speed!"
And must he change so soon the hand,
Just linked to his by holy band,
For the fell Cross of blood and brand?
And must the day, so blithe that rose,
And promised rapture in the close,
Before its setting hour, divide
The bridegroom from the plighted bride?
O fatal doom!—it must! it must!
Clan-Alpine's cause, her Chieftain's trust,
Her summons dread, brooks no delay;
Stretch to the race—away! away!

XXII.

Yet slow he laid his plaid aside,
And, lingering, eyed his lovely bride,
Until he saw the starting tear
Speak woe he might not stop to cheer;
Then, trusting not a second look,
In haste he sped him up the brook,
Nor backward glanced, till on the heath,
Where Lubnaig's lake supplies the Teith.—
What in the racer's bosom stirred?
The sickening pang of hope deferred,
And memory, with a torturing train
Of all his morning visions vain.

Mingled with love's impatience, came
The manly thirst for martial fame;
The stormy joy of mountaineers,
Ere yet they rush upon the spears;
And zeal for clan and chieftain burning,
And hope, from well-fought field returning,
With war's red honours on his crest,
To clasp his Mary to his breast.
Stung by such thoughts, o'er bank and brae,
Like fire from flint he glanced away,
While high resolve, and feeling strong,
Burst into voluntary song.

XXIII.

SONG.

The heath this night must be my bed,
The bracken* curtain for my head,
My lullaby the warder's tread,
Far, far from love and thee, Mary;
To-morrow eve, more stilly laid,
My couch may be my bloody plaid,
My vesper song, thy wail, sweet maid!
It will not waken me, Mary!

I may not, dare not, fancy now
The grief that clouds thy lovely brow;
I dare not think upon thy vow,
And all it promised me, Mary.
No fond regret must Norman know;
When bursts Clan-Alpine on the foe,
His heart must be like bended bow,
His foot like arrow free, Mary.

A time will come with feeling fraught!
For, if I fall in battle fought,
Thy hapless lover's dying thought,
Shall be a thought on thee, Mary.
And if returned from conquered foes,
How blithely will the evening close,
How sweet the linnet sing repose
To my young bride and me, Mary!

XXIV.

Not faster o'er thy heathery braes,
Balquidder, speeds the midnight blaze,†

* Fern.

† It may be necessary to inform the southern reader, that the heath on the Scottish moor-lands is often set fire to, that the sheep may have the advantage of the young herbage produced in room of the tough old heather-plants. This custom (execrated by sportsmen) produces occasionally the most beautiful nocturnal appearances, similar almost to the discharge of a volcano. The simile is not new to poetry. The charge of a warrior, in the fine ballad of "Hardyknute," is said to be "like a fire to heather set."

Rushing in conflagration strong,
Thy deep ravines and dells along,
Wrapping thy cliffs in purple glow,
And reddening the dark lakes below;
Nor faster speeds it, nor so far,
As o'er thy heaths the voice of war.
The signal roused to martial coil
The sullen margin of Loch Voil,
Waked still Loch Doine, and to the source
Alarmed, Balvaig, thy swampy course;
Thence southward turned its rapid road
Adown Strath-Gartney's valley broad.
Till rose in arms each man might claim
A portion in Clan-Alpine's name:
From the grey sire, whose trembling hand
Could hardly buckle on his brand,
To the raw boy, whose shaft and bow
Were yet scarce terror to the crow.
Each valley, each sequestered glen,
Mustered its little horde of men,
That met as torrents from the height,
In Highland dale their streams unite,
Still gathering, as they pour along,
A voice more loud, a tide more strong,
Till at the rendezvous they stood
By hundreds prompt for blows and blood;
Each trained to arms since life began,
Owning no tie but to his clan,
No oath, but by his Chieftain's hand,*
No law, but Roderick Dhu's command.

XXV.

That summer morn had Roderick Dhu
Surveyed the skirts of Ben-venue,
And sent his scouts o'er hill and heath,
To view the frontiers of Menteith.
All backward came with news of truce;
Still lay each martial Græme and Bruce,
In Rednock courts no horsemen wait,
No banner waved on Cardross gate,
On Duchray's towers no beacon shone,
Nor scared the herons from Loch Con;
All seemed at peace.—Now, wot ye why
The Chieftain, with such anxious eye,
Ere to the muster he repair,
This western frontier scanned with care?—
In Ben-venue's most darksome cleft,
A fair, though cruel pledge was left;
For Douglas, to his promise true,
That morning from the isle withdrew,

* The deep and implicit respect paid by the Highland clansmen to their chief, rendered this both a common and a solemn oath.

And in a deep sequestered dell
Had sought a low and lonely cell.
By many a bard, in Celtic tongue,
Has Coir-nan-Uriskin* been sung;
A softer name the Saxon gave,
And called the grot the Goblin-cave.

XXVI.

It was a wild and strange retreat,
As e'er was trod by outlaw's feet.
The dell, upon the mountain's crest,
Yawned like a gash on warrior's breast;
Its trench had stayed full many a rock,
Hurled by primeval earthquake shock
From Ben-venue's grey summit wild,
And here, in random ruin piled,
They frowned incumbent o'er the spot,
And formed the rugged sylvan grot.
The oak and birch, with mingled shade,
At noontide there a twilight made,
Unless when short and sudden shone
Some straggling beam on cliff or stone,
With such a glimpse as prophet's eye
Gains on thy depth, Futurity.
No murmur waked the solemn still,
Save tinkling of a fountain rill;
But when the wind chafed with the lake,
A sullen sound would upward break,
With dashing hollow voice, that spoke
The incessant war of wave and rock.
Suspended cliffs, with hideous sway,
Seemed nodding o'er the cavern grey.
From such a den the wolf had sprung,
In such the wild cat leaves her young;
Yet Douglas and his daughter fair
Sought, for a space, their safety there.
Grey Superstition's whisper dread
Debarred the spot to vulgar tread;
For there, she said, did fays resort,
And satyrs hold their sylvan court,
By moonlight tread their mystic maze,
And blast the rash beholder's gaze.

XXVII.

Now eve, with western shadows long,
Floated on Katrine bright and strong,

* This is a very steep and most romantic hollow in the mountain of Ben-venue, overhanging the south-eastern extremity of Loch-Katrine. The name literally implies the Corri, or Den, of the wild or shaggy men. Tradition has ascribed to the *Urisk*, who gives name to the cavern, a figure between a goat and a man; in short, however much the classical reader may be startled, precisely that of the Grecian satyr.

When Roderick, with a chosen few,
Repassed the heights of Ben-venue.
Above the Goblin-cave they go,
Through the wild pass of Beal-nam-bo;*
The prompt retainers speed before,
To launch the shallop from the shore,
For 'cross Loch-Katrine lies his way
To view the passes of Achray,
And place his clansmen in array.
Yet lags the Chief in musing mind,
Unwonted sight, his men behind.
A single page, to bear his sword,†
Alone attended on his lord;
The rest their way through thickets break,
And soon await him by the lake.
It was a fair and gallant sight,
To view them from the neighbouring height,
By the low-levelled sunbeam's light;
For strength and stature, from the clan
Each warrior was a chosen man,
As even afar might well be seen,
By their proud step and martial mien.
Their feathers dance, their tartans float,
Their targets gleam, as by the boat
A wild and warlike group they stand,
That well became such mountain strand.

XXVIII.

Their Chief, with step reluctant, still
Was lingering on the craggy hill,
Hard by where turned apart the road
To Douglas's obscure abode.
It was but with that dawning morn
That Roderick Dhu had proudly sworn,
To drown his love in war's wild roar,
Nor think of Ellen Douglas more;
But he who stems a stream with sand,
And fetters flame with flaxen band,
Has yet a harder task to prove—
By firm resolve to conquer love!

* Bealach-nam-Bo, or the pass of cattle, is a most magnificent glade, overhung with aged birch-trees, a little higher up the mountain than the Coir-nan-Uriskin. The whole composes the most sublime piece of scenery that imagination can conceive.

† A Highland chief, being as absolute in his patriarchal authority as any prince, had a corresponding number of officers attached to his person. In addition to his body-guard, called *Luichttach*, these were: 1. The *Henchman;* 2. the *Bard;* 3. *Bladier*, or spokesman; 4. *Gillie-more*, or sword-bearer, alluded to in the text; 5. *Gillie-casflue*, who carried the chief, if on foot, over the fords; 6. *Gillie-comstraine*, who leads the chief's horse; 7. *Gillie-Trushanarinsh*, the baggage-man; 8. the *Piper;* 9. the *Piper's Gillie*, or attendant, who carries the bagpipe.

Eve finds the Chief, like restless ghost,
Still hovering near his treasure lost;
For though his haughty heart deny
A parting meeting to his eye,
Still fondly strains his anxious ear
The accents of her voice to hear,
And inly did he curse the breeze
That waked to sound the rustling trees.
But, hark! what mingles in the strain?
It is the harp of Allan-bane,
That wakes its measures slow and high,
Attuned to sacred minstrelsy.
What melting voice attends the strings?
'Tis Ellen, or an angel, sings!

XXIX.

HYMN TO THE VIRGIN.

Ave Maria! maiden mild!
Listen to a maiden's prayer:
Thou canst hear though from the wild,
Thou canst save amid despair.
Safe may we sleep beneath thy care,
Though banished, outcast, and reviled—
Maiden! hear a maiden's prayer;
Mother, hear a suppliant child!
Ave Maria!

Ave Maria! undefiled!
The flinty couch we now must share,
Shall seem with down of eider piled,
If thy protection hover there.
The murky cavern's heavy air
Shall breathe of balm if thou hast smiled;
Then, Maiden! hear a maiden's prayer,
Mother, list a suppliant child!
Ave Maria!

Ave Maria! stainless styled!
Foul demons of the earth and air,
From this their wonted haunt exiled,
Shall flee before thy presence fair.
We bow us to our lot of care,
Beneath thy guidance reconciled;
Hear for a maid a maiden's prayer!
And for a father hear a child!
Ave Maria!

XXX.

Died on the harp the closing hymn—
Unmoved in attitude and limb,

As listening still, Clan-Alpine's lord
Stood leaning on his heavy sword,
Until the page, with humble sign,
Twice pointed to the sun's decline;
Then, while his plaid he round him cast,
"It is the last time—'tis the last,—
He muttered thrice,—"the last time e'er
That angel voice shall Roderick hear!"
It was a goading thought—his stride
Hied hastier down the mountain-side;
Sullen he flung him in the boat,
And instant 'cross the lake it shot.
They landed in that silvery bay,
And eastward held their hasty way
Till, with the latest beams of light,
The band arrived on Lanrick height,
Where mustered in the vale below,
Clan-Alpine's men in martial show.

XXXI.

A various scene the clansmen made,
Some sate, some stood, some slowly strayed:
But most, with mantles folded round,
Were couched to rest upon the ground,
Scarce to be known by curious eye,
From the deep heather where they lie,
So well was matched the tartan screen
With heath-bell dark and brackens green;
Unless where, here and there, a blade,
Or lance's point, a glimmer made,
Like glow-worm twinkling through the shade,
But, when, advancing through the gloom,
They saw the Chieftain's eagle plume,
Their shout of welcome, shrill and wide,
Shook the steep mountain's steady side.
Thrice it arose, and lake and fell
Three times returned the martial yell.
It died upon Bochastle's plain,
And Silence claimed her evening reign.

CANTO FOURTH.

THE PROPHECY.

I.

"The rose is fairest when 'tis budding new,
And hope is brightest when it dawns from fears;
The rose is sweetest washed with morning dew,
And love is loveliest when embalmed in tears.
O wilding rose, whom fancy thus endears,
I bid your blossoms in my bonnet wave,
Emblem of hope and love through future years!"
Thus spoke young Norman, heir of Armandave,
What time the sun arose on Vennachar's broad wave.

II.

Such fond conceit, half said, half sung,
Love prompted to the bridegroom's tongue:
All while he stripped the wild-rose spray,
His axe and bow beside him lay,
For on a pass 'twixt lake and wood,
A wakeful sentinel he stood.
Hark!—on the rock a footstep rung,
And instant to his arms he sprung.
"Stand, or thou diest!—What, Malise?—soon
Art thou returned from Braes of Doune.
By thy keen step and glance I know,
Thou bring'st us tidings of the foe."
(For while the Fiery Cross hied on,
On distant scout had Malise gone.)
"Where sleeps the Chief?" the henchman said,
"Apart, in yonder misty glade;
To his lone couch I'll be your guide."
Then called a slumberer by his side,
And stirred him with his slackened bow—
"Up, up, Glentarkin! rouse thee, ho!
We seek the Chieftain; on the track,
Keep eagle watch till I come back."

III.

Together up the pass they sped:
"What of the foeman?" Norman said.
"Varying reports from near and far,
This certain—that a band of war
Has for two days been ready boune,
At prompt command, to march from Doune;
King James, the while, with princely powers,
Holds revelry in Stirling towers.
Soon will this dark and gathering cloud
Speak on our glens in thunder loud.

Inured to bide such bitter bout,
The warrior's plaid may bear it out;
But, Norman, how wilt thou provide
A shelter for thy bonny bride?"
"What! know ye not that Roderick's care
To the lone isle hath caused repair
Each maid and matron of the clan,
And every child and aged man
Unfit for arms; and given his charge,
Nor skiff nor shallop, boat nor barge,
Upon these lakes shall float at large,
But all beside the islet moor,
That such dear pledge may rest secure?"—

IV.

"'Tis well advised—the Chieftain's plan
Bespeaks the father of his clan.
But wherefore sleeps Sir Roderick Dhu
Apart from all his followers true?"
"It is, because last evening-tide
Brian an augury hath tried,
Of that dread kind which must not be
Unless in dread extremity,
The Taghairm* called; by which, afar
Our sires foresaw the events of war.
Duncraggan's milk-white bull they slew."

MALISE.

"Ah! well the gallant brute I knew,
The choicest of the prey we had,
When swept our merry-men Gallangad.†

*The Highlanders, like all rude people, had various superstitious modes of inquiring into futurity. One of the most noted was the *Taghairm*, mentioned above. A person was wrapped in the skin of a newly-slain bullock, and deposited beside a waterfall, or at the bottom of a precipice, or in some other strange, wild, and unusual situation, where the scenery around him suggested nothing but objects of horror. In this situation he revolved in his mind the question proposed, and whatever was impressed upon him by his exalted imagination, passed for the inspiration of the disembodied spirits who haunt these desolate recesses. In some of the Hebrides, they attributed the same oracular power to a large black stone by the sea-shore, which they approached with certain solemnities, and considered the first fancy which came into their own minds, after they did so, to be the undoubted dictate of the tutelar deity of the stone, and as such, to be, if possible, punctually complied with.

† I know not if it be worth observing, that this passage is taken almost literally from the mouth of an old Highland Kerne, or Ketteran, as they were called. He used to narrate the merry doings of the good old time when he was follower of *Ghlune Dhu*, or *Black-knee*, a relation of Rob Roy Macgregor, and hardly his inferior in fame. This leader, on one occasion, thought proper to make a descent upon the lower part of the Loch-Lomond district, and summoned all the heritors and farmers to meet at the Kirk of Drymen, to pay him blackmail, *i. e.*, tribute for forbearance and protection. As this invitation

His hide was snow, his horns were dark,
His red eye glowed like fiery spark;
So fierce, so tameless, and so fleet,
Sore did he cumber our retreat,
And kept our stoutest kernes* in awe,
Even at the pass of Beal'maha.
But steep and flinty was the road,
And sharp the hurrying pikeman's goad,
And when we came to Dennan's Row,
A child might scathless stroke his brow."—

V.

NORMAN.

"That bull was slain: his reeking hide
They stretched the cataract beside,
Whose waters their wild tumult toss
Adown the black and craggy boss
Of that huge cliff, whose ample verge
Tradition calls the Hero's Targe.†
Couched on a shelve beneath its brink,
Close where the thundering torrents sink,
Rocking beneath their headlong sway
And drizzled by the ceaseless spray,
'Midst groan of rock, and roar of stream,
The wizard waits prophetic dream.
Nor distant rests the Chief:—but hush!
See, gliding slow through mist and bush,
The Hermit gains yon rock, and stands
To gaze upon our slumbering bands.
Seems he not, Malise, like a ghost,
That hover's o'er a slaughtered host?
Or raven on the blasted oak,
That, watching while the deer is broke,
His morsel claims with sullen croak?"‡

was supported by a band of thirty or forty stout fellows, only one gentleman, an ancestor, if I mistake not, of the present Mr. Grahame of Gartmore, ventured to decline compliance. Ghlune Dhu instantly swept his land of all he could drive away, and among the spoil was a bull of the old Scottish wild breed, whose ferocity occasioned great plague to the Ketterans. "But ere we had reached the Row of Dennan," said the old man, "a child might have scratched his ears."

* A foot-soldier.

† There is a rock in the forest of Glenfinlas, by which a tumultuary cataract takes its course. This wild place is said in former times to have afforded refuge to an outlaw, who was supplied with provisions by a woman, who lowered them down from the brink of the precipice above. His water he procured for himself, by letting down a flagon, tied to a string, into the black pool beneath the fall.

‡ Everything belonging to the chase was matter of solemnity among our ancestors; but nothing was more so than the mode of cutting up, or, as it was technically called, *breaking* the slaughtered stag. The forester had his allotted portion; the hounds had a certain allowance, and, to make the division as general as possible, the very birds had their share also.

MALISE.

"Peace! peace! to other than to me,
Thy words were evil augury;
But still I hold Sir Roderick's blade
Clan-Alpine's omen and her aid,
Not aught that, gleaned from heaven or hell,
Yon fiend-begotten monk can tell.
The Chieftain joins him, see—and now,
Together they descend the brow."—

VI.

And, as they came, with Alpine's Lord
The Hermit Monk held solemn word:
"Roderick! it is a fearful strife,
For man endowed with mortal life,
Whose shroud of sentient clay can still
Feel feverish pang and fainting chill,
Whose eye can stare in stony trance,
Whose hair can rouse like warrior's lance,—
'Tis hard for such to view, unfurled
The curtain of the future world.
Yet, witness every quaking limb,
My sunken pulse, mine eyeballs dim,
My soul with harrowing anguish torn,
This for my chieftain have I borne!
The shapes that sought my fearful couch,
A human tongue may ne'er avouch;
No mortal man,—save he, who, bred
Between the living and the dead,
Is gifted beyond nature's law,
Had e'er survived to say he saw.
At length the fateful answer came,
In characters of living flame!
Not spoke in word, nor blazed in scroll,
But borne and branded on my soul;—
WHICH SPILLS THE FOREMOST FOEMAN'S LIFE,
THAT PARTY CONQUERS IN THE STRIFE."*

VII.

"Thanks, Brian, for thy zeal and care!
Good is thine augury, and fair.
Clan-Alpine ne'er in battle stood,
But first our broad-swords tasted blood.
A surer victim still I know,
Self-offered to the auspicious blow;
A spy hath sought my land this morn,
No eve shall witness his return!

* Though this be in the text described as the response of the Taghairm, or Oracle of the Hide, it was of itself an augury frequently attended to. The fate of the battle was often anticipated, in the imagination of the combatants, by observing which party first shed blood.

My followers guard each pass's mouth,
To east, to westward, and to south;
Red Murdoch, bribed to be his guide,
Has charge to lead his steps aside,
Till, in deep path or dingle brown,
He light on those shall bring him down.
But see, who comes his news to show!
Malise! what tidings of the foe?"

VIII.

"At Doune, o'er many a spear and glaive,
Two Barons proud their banners wave.
I saw the Moray's silver star,
And marked the sable pale of Mar."—
"By Alpine's soul, high tidings those!
I love to hear of worthy foes.
When move they on?"—"To-morrow's noon
Will see them here for battle boune."*
"Then shall it see a meeting stern!—
But, for the place—say, couldst thou learn
Nought of the friendly clans of Earn?
Strengthened by them we well might bide
The battle on Benledi's side.—
Thou couldst not?—well, Clan-Alpine's men
Shall man the Trosach's shaggy glen;
Within Loch-Katrine's gorge we'll fight,
All in our maids' and matrons' sight,
Each for his hearth and household fire,
Father for child, and son for sire,
Lover for maid beloved!—but why—
Is it the breeze affects mine eye?
Or dost thou come, ill-omened tear!
A messenger of doubt or fear?
No! sooner may the Saxon lance
Unfix Benledi from his stance,†
Than doubt or terror can pierce through
The unyielding heart of Roderick Dhu;
'Tis stubborn as his trusty targe.—
Each to his post!—all know their charge."
The pibroch sounds, the bands advance,
The broad-swords gleam, the banners dance,
Obedient to the Chieftain's glance.
I turn me from the martial roar,
And seek Coir-Uriskin once more.

IX.

Where is the Douglas?—he is gone;
And Ellen sits on the grey stone
Fast by the cave, and makes her moan;
While vainly Allan's words of cheer
Are poured on her unheeding ear.—

* Ready. † Station.

"He will return—Dear lady, trust!—
With joy return;—he will—he must.
Well was it time to seek afar
Some refuge from impending war,
When e'en Clan-Alpine's rugged swarm
Are cowed by the approaching storm.
I saw their boats, with many a light
Floating the live-long yesternight,
Shifting like flashes darted forth
By the red streamers of the north;
I marked at morn how close they ride,
Thick moored by the lone islet's side,
Like wild ducks couching in the fen,
When stoops the hawk upon the glen.
Since this rude race dare not abide
The peril on the main-land side,
Shall not thy noble father's care
Some safe retreat for thee prepare?"—

X.

ELLEN.

"No, Allan, no! Pretext so kind
My wakeful terrors could not blind.
When in such tender tone, yet grave,
Douglas a parting blessing gave,
The tear that glistened in his eye
Drowned not his purpose fixed and high.
My soul, though feminine and weak,
Can image his; e'en as the lake,
Itself disturbed by slightest stroke
Reflects the invulnerable rock.
He hears report of battle rife,
He deems himself the cause of strife.
I saw him redden, when the theme
Turned, Allan, on thine idle dream,
Of Malcolm Græme in fetters bound,
Which I, thou saidst, about him wound.
Think'st thou he trowed thine omen aught?
Oh no! 'twas apprehensive thought
For the kind youth,—for Roderick too—
(Let me be just) that friend so true;
In danger both, and in our cause!
Minstrel, the Douglas dare not pause.
Why else that solemn warning given,
'If not on earth, we meet in heaven?'
Why else, to Cambus-kenneth's fane,
If eve return him not again,
Am I to hie and make me known?
Alas! he goes to Scotland's throne,
Buys his friend's safety with his own;—
He goes to do—what I had done,
Had Douglas's daughter been his son!"

XI.

"Nay, lovely Ellen!—dearest, nay!
If aught should his return delay,
He only named yon holy fane
As fitting place to meet again.
Be sure he's safe; and for the Græme—
Heaven's blessing on his gallant name!—
My visioned sight may yet prove true,
Nor bode of ill to him or you.
When did my gifted dream beguile?
Think of the stranger at the isle,
And think upon the harpings slow,
That presaged this approaching woe!
Sooth was my prophecy of fear;
Believe it when it augurs cheer.
Would we had left this dismal spot!
Ill luck still haunts a fairy grot.
Of such a wondrous tale I know—
Dear lady, change that look of woe!
My harp was wont thy grief to cheer."

ELLEN.

"Well, be it as thou wilt; I hear,
But cannot stop the bursting tear."
The Minstrel tried his simple art,
But distant far was Ellen's heart.

XII.

BALLAD.

ALICE BRAND.*

Merry it is in the good green wood,
When the mavis† and merle‡ are singing,
When the deer sweeps by, and the hounds are in cry,
And the hunter's horn is ringing.

"O Alice Brand, my native land
Is lost for love of you;
And we must hold by wood and wold,
As outlaws wont to do.

"O Alice, 'twas all for thy locks so bright,
And 'twas all for thine eyes so blue,
That on the night of our luckless flight
Thy brother bold I slew.

"Now must I teach to hew the beech,
The hand that held the glaive,
For leaves to spread our lowly bed,
And stakes to fence our cave.

* This little fairy tale is founded upon a very curious Danish ballad, which occurs in the "Kiempe Viser," a collection of heroic songs, first published in 1591, and reprinted in 1695, inscribed by Anders Sofrensen, the collector and editor, to Sophia, Queen of Denmark.

† Thrush. ‡ Blackbird.

"And for vest of pall, thy fingers small,
That wont on harp to stray,
A cloak must shear from the slaughtered deer,
To keep the cold away."—

"O Richard! if my brother died,
'Twas but a fatal chance;
For darkling was the battle tried,
And Fortune sped the lance.

"If pall and vair no more I wear,
Nor thou the crimson sheen,
As warm, we'll say, is the russet grey,
As gay the forest-green.

"And, Richard, if our lot be hard,
And lost thy native land,
Still Alice has her own Richard,
And he his Alice Brand."

XIII.

BALLAD CONTINUED.

'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in good green wood,
So blithe Lady Alice is singing;
On the beech's pride, and the oak's brown side,
Lord Richard's axe is ringing.

Up spoke the moody Elfin King,*
Who woned† within the hill,—
Like wind in the porch of a ruin'd church,
His voice was ghostly shrill.

"Why sounds yon stroke on beach and oak,
Our moonlight circle's screen?
Or who comes here to chase the deer
Beloved of our Elfin Queen?‡
Or who may dare on wold to wear
The fairie's fatal green?§

* In a long dissertation upon the fairy superstitons, published in the "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," most of the circumstances are collected which can throw light upon the popular belief, which even yet prevails respecting them in Scotland.

† Dwelt.

‡ Fairies, if not positively malevolent, are capricious and easily offended. They are, like other proprietors of forests, peculiarly jealous of their rights of *vert* and *venison*, as appears from the cause of offence taken, in the original Danish ballad. This jealousy was also an attribute of the northern *Duergar*, or dwarfs; to many of whose distinctions the fairies seemed to have succeeded, if, indeed, they are not the same class of beings. In the huge metrical record of German chivalry, entitled the "Helden-Buch," Sir Hildebrand, and the other heroes of whom it treats, are engaged in one of their most desperate adventures, from a rash violation of the rose-garden of an Elfin, or Dwarf King. There are yet traces of a belief in this worst and most malicious order of fairies among the Border wilds.

§ As the *Daoine Shi'* or Men of Peace, wore green habits, they

"Up Urgan, up! to yon mortal hie,
For thou wert christened man;*
For cross or sign thou wilt not fly,
For mutttered word or ban.

"Lay on him the curse of the withered heart,
The curse of the sleepless eye;
Till he wish and pray that his life would part,
Nor yet find leave to die."—

XIV.

BALLAD CONTINUED.

'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in good green wood,
Though the birds have stilled their singing:
The evening blaze doth Alice raise,
And Richard is fagots bringing.

Up Urgan starts, that hideous dwarf
Before Lord Richard stands,
And, as he crossed and blessed himself,
"I fear not sign," quoth the grisly elf,
"That is made with bloody hands."—

But out then spoke she, Alice Brand,
That woman void of fear,—
"And if there's blood upon his hand,
'Tis but the blood of deer."—

"Now loud thou liest, thou bold of mood!
It cleaves unto his hand,
The stain of thine own kindly blood,
The blood of Ethert Brand."—

Then forward stepped she, Alice Brand,
And made the holy sign.—
"And if there's blood on Richard's hand,
A spotless hand is mine.

were supposed to take offence when any mortals ventured to assume their favourite colour. Indeed, from some reason, which has been, perhaps, originally a general superstition, *green* is held in Scotland to be unlucky to particular tribes and counties. The Caithness men, who hold this belief, allege, as a reason, that their bands wore that colour when they were cut off at the battle of Flodden; and for the same reason they avoid crossing the Ord on a Monday, being the day of the week on which their ill-omened array set forth. Green is also disliked by those of the name of Ogilvy; but more especially is it held fatal to the whole clan of Grahame. It is remembered of an aged gentleman of that name, that when his horse fell in a fox-chase, he accounted for it at once by observing, that the whipcord attached to his lash was of this unlucky colour.

*The Elves were supposed greatly to envy the privileges acquired by Christian initiation, and they gave to those mortals who had fallen into their power a certain precedence, founded upon this advantageous distinction.

"And I conjure thee, Demon elf,
By Him, whom Demons fear,
To show us whence thou art thyself?
And what thine errand here?"

XV.

BALLAD CONTINUED.

"'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in Fairyland,
When fairy birds are singing,
When the court doth ride by their monarch's side,
With bit and bridle ringing:

"And gaily shines the Fairyland—
But all is glistening show,*
Like the idle gleam that December's beam
Can dart on ice and snow.

"And fading, like that varied gleam,
Is our inconstant shape,
Who now like knight and lady seem,
And now like dwarf and ape.

"It was between the night and day,
When the Fairy King has power,
That I sunk down in a sinful fray,
And, 'twixt life and death was snatched away
To the joyless Elfin bower.†

"But wist I of a woman bold,
Who thrice my brow durst sign,
I might regain my mortal mold,‡
As fair a form as thine."

She crossed him once—she crossed him twice—
That lady was so brave;
The fouler grew his goblin hue,
The darker grew the cave.

She crossed him thrice, that lady bold:
He rose beneath her hand
The fairest knight on Scottish mold,
Her brother Ethert Brand!

Merry it is in the good green wood,
When the mavis and merle are singing.
But merrier were they in Dunfermline grey,
When all the bells were ringing.

*No fact respecting Fairyland seems to be better ascertained than that of the fantastic and illusory nature of their apparent pleasure and splendour.

†The subjects of Fairyland were recruited from the regions of humanity by a sort of crimping system, which extended to adults as well as to infants. Many of those who were in this world supposed to have discharged the debt of nature, had only become denizens of the "Londe of Faery."

‡Earth.

XVI.

Just as the minstrel sounds were stayed,
A stranger climbed the steepy glade:
His martial step, his stately mien,
His hunting suit of Lincoln green,
His eagle glance, remembrance claims,—
'Tis Snowdoun's Knight—'tis James Fitz-James.
Ellen beheld as in a dream,
Then starting, scarce suppressed a scream:
"O stranger! in such hour of fear,
What evil hap has brought thee here?"—
"An evil hap, how can it be,
That bids me look again on thee?
By promise bound, my former guide
Met me betimes this morning tide,
And marshalled, over bank and bourne,
The happy path of my return."—
"The happy path!—what! said he nought
Of war, of battle to be fought,
Of guarded pass?"—"No, by my faith!
Nor saw I aught could augur scathe."—
"O haste thee, Allan, to the kerne,
Yonder his tartans I discern;
Learn thou his purpose, and conjure
That he will guide the stranger sure!—
What prompted thee, unhappy man?
The meanest serf in Roderick's clan
Had not been bribed by love or fear,
Unknown to him, to guide thee here."

XVII.

"Sweet Ellen, dear my life must be,
Since it is worthy care from thee;
Yet life I hold but idle breath,
When love or honour 's weighed with death.
Then let me profit by my chance,
And speak my purpose bold at once.
I come to bear thee from a wild,
Where ne'er before such blossom smiled;
By this soft hand to lead thee far
From frantic scenes of feud and war.
Near Bochastle my horses wait;
They bear us soon to Stirling gate.
I'll place thee in a lovely bower,
I'll guard thee like a tender flower,"——
"O! hush! Sir Knight! 'twere female art
To say I do not read thy heart;
Too much, before, my selfish ear
Was idly soothed my praise to hear.
That fatal bait hath lured thee back,
In deathful hour, o'er dangerous track;

And how, O how, can I atone
The wreck my vanity brought on!—
One way remains—I'll tell him all—
Yes! struggling bosom, forth it shall!
Thou whose light folly bears the blame,
Buy thine own pardon with thy shame!
But first—my father is a man
Outlawed, and exiled, under ban;
The price of blood is on his head,
With me 'twere infamy to wed.—
Still wouldst thou speak?—then hear the truth!
Fitz-James, there is a noble youth,—
If yet he is!—exposed for me
And mine to dread extremity,—
Thou hast the secret of my heart;
Forgive, be generous, and depart."—

XVIII.

Fitz-James knew every wily train
A lady's fickle heart to gain,
But here he knew and felt them vain.
There shot no glance from Ellen's eye,
To give her steadfast speech the lie;
In maiden confidence she stood,
Though mantled in her cheek the blood,
And told her love with such a sigh
Of deep and hopeless agony,
As death had sealed her Malcolm's doom,
And she sat sorrowing on his tomb.
Hope vanished from Fitz-James's eye,
But not with hope fled sympathy.
He proffered to attend her side,
As brother would a sister guide.—
"O! little knowest thou Roderick's heart!
Safer for both we go apart.
O haste thee, and from Allan learn,
If thou mayst trust yon wily kerne."
With hand upon his forehead laid,
The conflict of his mind to shade,
A parting step or two he made;
Then, as some thought had crossed his brain,
He paused, and turned, and came again.

XIX.

"Hear, lady, yet, a parting word!—
It chanced in fight that my poor sword
Preserved the life of Scotland's lord.
This ring the grateful Monarch gave,
And bade, when I had boon to crave,
To bring it back, and boldly claim
The recompense that I would name.
Ellen, I am no courtly lord,
But one who lives by lance and sword,

Whose castle is his helm and shield,
His lordship, the embattled field.
What from a prince can I demand,
Who neither reck of state nor land?
Ellen, thy hand—the ring is thine;
Each guard and usher knows the sign.
Seek thou the king without delay;
This signet shall secure thy way;
And claim thy suit, whate'er it be,
As ransom of his pledge to me."—
He placed the golden circlet on,
Paused—kissed her hand—and then was gone.
The aged Minstrel stood aghast,
So hastily Fitz-James shot past.
He joined his guide, and wending down
The ridges of the mountain brown,
Across the stream they took their way,
That joins Loch-Katrine to Achray.

XX.

All in the Trosach's glen was still,
Noontide was sleeping on the hill:
Sudden his guide whooped loud and high—
"Murdoch! was that a signal-cry?"
He stammered forth,—"I shout to scare
Yon raven from his dainty fare."
He looked—he knew the raven's prey,
His own brave steed:—"Ah! gallant grey!
For thee—for me perchance—'twere well
We ne'er had seen the Trosach's dell.—
Murdoch, move first—but silently;
Whistle or whoop, and thou shalt die."—
Jealous and sullen on they fared,
Each silent, each upon his guard.

XXI.

Now wound the path its dizzy ledge
Around a precipice's edge,
When lo! a wasted female form,
Blighted by wrath of sun and storm,
In tattered weeds and wild array,
Stood on a cliff beside the way,
And glancing round her restless eye
Upon the wood, the rock, the sky,
Seemed nought to mark, yet all to spy.
Her brow was wreathed with gaudy broom;
With gesture wild she waved a plume
Of feathers, which the eagles fling
To crag and cliff with dusky wing;
Such spoils her desperate step had sought,
Where scarce was footing for the goat.
The tartan plaid she first descried,
And shrieked, till all the rocks replied;

As loud she laughed when near they drew,
For then the Lowland garb she knew;
And then her hands she wildly wrung,
And then she wept, and then she sung.—
She sung!—the voice, in better time,
Perchance to harp or lute might chime;
But now, though strained and roughened, still
Rung wildly sweet to dale and hill.

XXII.

SONG.

"They bid me sleep, they bid me pray,
They say my brain is warped and wrung—
I cannot sleep on Highland brae,
I cannot pray in Highland tongue.
But were I now where Allan glides,
Or heard my native Devan's tides,
So sweetly would I rest and pray
That heaven would close my wintry day!

"'Twas thus my hair they bade me braid,
They bade me to the Church repair;
It was my bridal morn, they said,
And my true love would meet me there.
But woe betide the cruel guile,
That drowned in blood the morning smile!
And woe betide the fairy dream!
I only waked to sob and scream."

XXIII.

"Who is this maid? what means her lay?
She hovers o'er the hollow way,
And flutters wide her mantle grey,
As the lone heron spreads his wing,
By twilight, o'er a haunted spring."—
"'Tis Blanche of Devan," Murdoch said,
"A crazed and captive Lowland maid,
Ta'en on the morn she was a bride,
When Roderick forayed Devan-side.
The gay bridegroom resistance made,
And felt our Chief's unconquered blade.
I marvel she is now at large,
But oft she 'scapes from Maudlin's charge.
Hence, brain-sick fool!" He raised his bow:—
"Now, if thou strikest her but one blow,
I'll pitch thee from the cliff as far
As ever peasant pitched a bar."
"Thanks, champion, thanks!" the Maniac cried,
And pressed her to Fitz-James's side.
"See the grey pennons I prepare,
To seek my true-love through the air!
I will not lend that savage groom,
To break his fall, one downy plume!

No!—deep amid disjointed stones,
The wolves shall batten* on his bones,
And then shall his detested plaid,
By bush and brier in mid-air stayed,
Wave forth a banner fair and free,
Meet signal for their revelry."

XXIV.

"Hush thee, poor maiden, and be still!"—
"O! thou look'st kindly, and I will.—
Mine eye has dried and wasted been,
But still it loves the Lincoln green;
And, though mine ear is all unstrung,
Still, still it loves the Lowland tongue.

"For O my sweet William was forester true,
He stole poor Blanche's heart away!
His coat it was all of the greenwood hue,
And so blithely he trilled the Lowland lay!"—

"It was not that I meant to tell . . .
But thou art wise, and guessest well."—
Then, in a low and broken tone,
And hurried note, the song went on.
Still on the Clansman, fearfully,
She fixed her apprehensive eye;
Then turned it on the Knight, and then
Her look glanced wildly o'er the glen.

XXV.

"The toils are pitched, and the stakes are set,
Ever sing merrily, merrily;
The bows they bend, and the knives they whet,
Hunters live so cheerily.

"It was a stag, a stag of ten,†
Bearing his branches sturdily;
He came stately down the glen,
Ever sing hardily, hardily.

"It was there he met with a wounded doe,
She was bleeding deathfully;
She warned him of the toils below,
O so faithfully, faithfully!

"He had an eye, and he could heed,
Ever sing warily, warily;
He had a foot, and he could speed—
Hunters watch so narrowly."

XXVI.

Fitz-James's mind was passion-tossed,
When Ellen's hints and fears were lost;

* Grow fat. † Having ten branches on his antlers.

But Murdoch's shout suspicion wrought,
And Blanche's song conviction brought.—
Not like a stag that spies the snare,
But lion of the hunt aware,
He waved at once his blade on high,
"Disclose thy treachery, or die!"—
Forth at full speed the Clansman flew
But in his race his bow he drew.
The shaft just grazed Fitz-James's crest,
And thrilled in Blanche's faded breast.—
Murdoch of Alpine! prove thy speed,
For ne'er had Alpine's son such need!
With heart of fire, and foot of wind
The fierce avenger is behind!
Fate judges of the rapid strife—
The forfeit, death—the prize is life!
Thy kindred ambush lies before,
Close couched upon the heathery moor;
Them couldst thou reach!—it may not be—
Thine ambushed kin thou ne'er shalt see,
The fiery Saxon gains on thee!
Resistless speeds the deadly thrust,
As lightning strikes the pine to dust;
With foot and hand Fitz-James must strain,
Ere he can win his blade again.
Bent o'er the fallen, with falcon eye,
He grimly smiled to see him die;
Then slower wended back his way
Where the poor maiden bleeding lay.

XXVII.

She sate beneath the birchen tree,
Her elbow resting on her knee;
She had withdrawn the fatal shaft,
And gazed on it, and feebly laughed;
Her wreath of broom and feathers grey,
Daggled* with blood, beside her lay.
The Knight to stanch the life-stream tried,
"Stranger, it is in vain!" she cried;
"This hour of death has given me more
Of reason's power than years before;
For, as these ebbing veins decay,
My frenzied visions fade away.
A helpless injured wretch I die,
And something tells me in thine eye,
That thou wert mine avenger born.
Seest thou this tress?—O! still I've worn
This little tress of yellow hair,
Through danger, frenzy, and despair!
It once was bright and clear as thine,
But blood and tears have dimmed its shine.

* Stained.

I will not tell thee when 'twas shred,
Nor from what guiltless victim's head—
My brain would turn!—but it shall wave
Like plumage on thy helmet brave,
Till sun and wind shall bleach the stain,
And thou wilt bring it me again.—
I waver still!—O God! more bright
Let Reason beam her parting light!—
O! by thy knighthood's honoured sign,
And for thy life preserved by mine,
When thou shalt see a darksome man,
Who boasts him Chief of Alpine's clan,
With tartans broad and shadowy plume,
And hand of blood, and brow of gloom,
Be thy heart bold, thy weapon strong,
And wreak poor Blanche of Devan's wrong!—
They watch for thee by pass and fell . . . .
Avoid the path . . . Oh God! . . . farewell!"—

XXVIII.

A kindly heart had brave Fitz-James;
Fast poured his eye at pity's claims;
And now, with mingled grief and ire,
He saw the murdered maid expire.
"God, in my need, be my relief,
As I wreak this on yonder Chief!"—
A lock from Blanche's tresses fair
He blended with her bridegroom's hair;
The mingled braid in blood he dyed,
And placed it on his bounet side:
"By Him whose word is truth I swear
No other favour will I wear,
Till this sad token I imbrue
In the best blood of Roderick Dhu!
But hark! what means yon faint halloo.
The chase is up,—but they shall know,
The stag at bay's a dangerous foe."—
Barred from the known but guarded way,
Through copse and cliffs Fitz-James must stray,
And oft must change his desperate track,
By stream and precipice turned back.
Heartless, fatigued, and faint, at length,
From lack of food and loss of strength,
He couched him in a thicket hoar,
And thought his toils and perils o'er:—
"Of all my rash adventures past,
This frantic feat will prove the last!
Who e'er so mad but might have guessed,
That all this Highland hornet's nest
Would muster up in swarms so soon
As e'er they heard of bands at Doune?

Like bloodhounds now they search me out.—
Hark, to the whistle and the shout!
If farther through the wilds I go,
I only fall upon the foe;
I'll couch me here till evening grey,
Then darkling try my dangerous way."

XXIX.

The shades of eve come slowly down,
The woods are wrapped in deeper brown,
The owl awakens from her dell,
The fox is heard upon the fell;
Enough remains of glimmering light
To guide the wanderer's steps aright,
Yet not enough from far to show
His figure to the watchful foe.
With cautious step, and ear awake,
He climbs the crag and threads the brake;
And not the summer solstice, there,
Tempered the midnight mountain air,
But every breeze that swept the wold,
Benumbed his drenchèd limbs with cold,
In dread, in danger, and alone,
Famished and chilled, through ways unknown,
Tangled and steep, he journeyed on;
Till, as a rock's huge point he turned,
A watch-fire close before him burned.

XXX.

Beside its embers red and clear,
Basked, in his plaid, a mountaineer;
And up he sprung with sword in hand,—
"Thy name and purpose! Saxon, stand!"—
"A stranger."—"What dost thou require?"—
"Rest and a guide, and food and fire.
My life's beset, my path is lost,
The gale has chilled my limbs with frost."
"Art thou a friend to Roderick?"—"No."
"Thou darest not call thyself a foe?"—
"I dare! to him and all the band
He brings to aid his murderous hand."—
"Bold words!—but, though the beast of game
The privilege of chase may claim,
Though space and law the stag we lend,
Ere hound we slip, or bow we bend,
Who ever recked, where, how, or when,
The prowling fox was trapped or slain?*
Thus, treacherous scouts,—yet sure they lie,
Who say thou camest a secret spy!"

* St. John actually used this illustration when engaged in confuting the plea of law proposed for the unfortunate earl of Strafford.

"They do, by Heaven!—Come Roderick Dhu,
And of his clan the boldest two,
And let me but till morning rest,
I write the falsehood on their crest."
"If by the blaze I mark aright,
Thou bear'st the belt and spur of Knight."—
"Then, by these tokens mayst thou know,
Each proud oppressor's mortal foe."—
"Enough, enough; sit down and share
A soldier's couch, a soldier's fare."—

XXXI.

He gave him of his Highland cheer,
The hardened flesh of mountain deer;*
Dry fuel on the fire he laid,
And bade the Saxon share his plaid;
He tended him like welcome guest,
Then thus his further speech addressed.
"Stranger, I am to Roderick Dhu
A clansman born, a kinsman true;
Each word against his honour spoke,
Demands of me avenging stroke;
Yet more,—upon thy fate, 'tis said,
A mighty augury is laid.
It rests with me to wind my horn,
Thou art with numbers overborne;
It rests with me, here, brand to brand,
Worn as thou art, to bid thee stand:
But nor for clan nor kindred's cause,
Will I depart from honour's laws:
To assail a wearied man were shame,
A stranger is a holy name;
Guidance and rest, and food and fire,
In vain he never must require.
Then rest thee here till dawn of day,
Myself will guide thee on the way,
O'er stock and stone, through watch and ward,
Till past Clan-Alpine's outmost guard,

* The Scottish Highlanders, in former times, had a concise mode of cooking their venison, or rather of dispensing with cooking it, which appears greatly to have surprised the French, whom chance made acquainted with it. The Vidame of Chartres, when a hostage in England, during the reign of Edward VI., was permitted to travel into Scotland, and penetrated as far as to the remote Highlands. After a great hunting-party, at which a most wonderful quantity of game was destroyed, he saw these *Scottish savages* devour a part of their venison raw, without any further preparation than compressing it between two batons of wood, so as to force out the blood, and render it extremely hard. This they reckoned a great delicacy; and when the Vidame partook of it, his compliance with their taste rendered him extremely popular. After all, it may be doubted whether *la chaire nostree*, for so the French called venison thus summarily prepared, was anything more than a mere rude kind of deer ham.

As far as Coilantogle's ford;
From thence thy warrant is thy sword."—
"I take thy courtesy, by Heaven,
As freely as 'tis nobly given!"—
"Well, rest thee; for the bittern's cry
Sings us the lake's wild lullaby."—
With that he shook the gathered heath,
And spread his plaid upon the wreath;
And the brave foemen, side by side,
Lay peaceful down, like brothers tried,
And slept until the dawning beam
Purpled the mountain and the stream.

CANTO FIFTH.

THE COMBAT.

I.

Fair as the earliest beam of eastern light,
When first, by the bewildered pilgrim spied,
It smiles upon the dreary brow of night,
And silvers o'er the torrent's foaming tide,
And lights the fearful path on mountain-side;—
Fair as that beam, although the fairest far,
Giving to horror grace, to danger pride,
Shine martial Faith, and Courtesy's bright star,
Through all the wreckful storms that cloud the brow of War.

II.

That early beam, so fair and sheen,
Was twinkling through the hazel screen,
When, rousing at its glimmer red,
The warriors left their lowly bed,
Looked out upon the dappled sky,
Muttered their soldier matins by,
And then awaked their fire, to steal,
As short and rude, their soldier meal.
That o'er, the Gael* around him threw
His graceful plaid of varied hue,
And, true to promise, led the way,
By thicket green and mountain grey.
A wildering path!—they winded now
Along the precipice's brow

* The Scottish Highlander calls himself *Gael*, or Gaul, and terms the Lowlanders *Sassenach*, or Saxons.

Commanding the rich scenes beneath,
The windings of the Forth and Teith,
And all the vales between that lie,
Till Stirling's turrets melt in sky;
Then, sunk in copse, their farthest glance
Gained not the length of horseman's lance.
'Twas oft so steep, the foot was fain
Assistance from the hand to gain;
So tangled oft, that, bursting through,
Each hawthorn shed her showers of dew,—
That diamond dew, so pure and clear,
It rivals all but Beauty's tear!

III.

At length they came where, stern and steep,
The hill sinks down upon the deep.
Here Vennachar in silver flows,
There, ridge on ridge, Benledi rose.
Ever the hollow path twined on,
Beneath steep bank and threatening stone;
A hundred men might hold the post
With hardihood against a host.
The rugged mountain's scanty cloak
Was dwarfish shrubs of birch and oak,
With shingles bare, and cliffs between,
And patches bright of bracken green,
And heather black, that waved so high,
It held the copse in rivalry.
But where the lake slept deep and still,
Dank osiers fringed the swamp and hill;
And oft both path and hill were torn,
Where wintry torrent down had borne,
And heaped upon the cumbered land
Its wreck of gravel, rocks, and sand.
So toilsome was the road to trace,
The guide, abating of his pace,
Led slowly through the pass's jaws,
And asked Fitz-James, by what strange cause
He sought these wilds, traversed by few
Without a pass from Roderick Dhu?

IV.

"Brave Gael, my pass, in danger tried,
Hangs in my belt, and by my side;
Yet, sooth to tell," the Saxon said,
"I dreamed not now to claim its aid;
When here, but three days since, I came,
Bewildered in pursuit of game,
All seemed as peaceful and as still,
As the mist slumbering on yon hill;
Thy dangerous chief was then afar,
Nor soon expected back from war.

Thus said, at least, my mountain guide,
Though deep, perchance, the villain lied."—
"Yet why a second venture try?"—
"A warrior thou, and ask me why?—
Moves our free course by such fixed cause,
As gives the poor mechanic laws?
Enough, I sought to drive away
The lazy hours of peaceful day;
Slight cause will then suffice to guide
A Knight's free footsteps far and wide,—
A falcon flown, a greyhound strayed,
The merry glance of mountain maid;
Or, if a path be dangerous known,
The danger's self is lure alone."—

V.

"Thy secret keep, I urge thee not;—
Yet, ere again ye sought this spot,
Say, heard ye nought of Lowland war,
Against Clan-Alpine raised by Mar?"—
—"No, by my word;—of bands prepared
To guard King James's sports I heard;
Nor doubt I aught, but, when they hear
This muster of the mountaineer,
Their pennons will abroad be flung,
Which else in Doune had peaceful hung."—
"Free be they flung!—for we were loth
Their silken folds should feast the moth.
Free be they flung!—as free shall wave
Clan-Alpine's pine in banner brave.
But, stranger, peaceful since you came,
Bewildered in the mountain game,
Whence the bold boast by which you show
Vich-Alpine's vowed and mortal foe?"—
"Warrior, but yester-morn I knew
Nought of thy Chieftain, Roderick Dhu,
Save as an outlawed desperate man,
The chief of a rebellious clan,
Who, in the Regent's court and sight,
With ruffian dagger stabbed a knight;
Yet this alone might from his part
Sever each true and loyal heart."—

VI.

Wrothful at such arraignment foul,
Dark lowered the clansman's sable scowl.
A space he paused, then sternly said,—
"And heardst thou why he drew his blade?
Heardst thou that shameful word and blow
Brought Roderick's vengeance on his foe?
What recked the Chieftain, if he stood
On Highland heath or Holy Rood?

He rights such wrong where it is given,
If it were in the court of Heaven."
"Still was it outrage;—yet, 'tis true,
Not then claimed sovereignty his due;
While Albany, with feeble hand,
Held borrowed truncheon of command.*
The young King, mewed in Stirling tower,
Was stranger to respect and power.
But then, thy Chieftain's robber life!—
Winning mean prey by causeless strife,
Wrenching from ruined Lowland swain
His herds and harvest reared in vain,—
Methinks a soul like thine should scorn
The spoils from such foul foray borne."—

VII.

The Gael beheld him grim the while,
And answered with disdainful smile,—
"Saxon, from yonder mountain high,
I marked thee send delighted eye,
Far to the south and east, where lay,
Extended in succession gay,
Deep waving fields and pastures green,
With gentle slopes and groves between:—
These fertile plains, that softened vale
Were once the birthright of the Gael,
The stranger came with iron hand,
And from our fathers reft the land.
Where dwell we now! See, rudely swell
Crag o'er crag, and fell o'er fell.
Ask we this savage hill we tread,
For fattened steer or household bread;
Ask we for flocks these shingles dry,
And well the mountain might reply,—
'To you, as to your sires of yore,
Belong the target and claymore!
I give you shelter in my breast,
Your own good blades must win the rest.'—
Pent in this fortress of the North,
Think'st thou we will not sally forth,
To spoil the spoiler as we may,
And from the robber rend the prey?
Ay, by my soul!—While on yon plain
The Saxon rears one shock of grain,
While, of ten thousand herds, there strays
But one along yon river's maze,—
The Gael, of plain and river heir,
Shall, with strong hand, redeem his share.

* There is scarcely a more disorderly period in Scottish history than that which succeeded the battle of Flodden, and occupied the minority of James IV. Feuds of ancient standing broke out like old wounds, and every quarrel among the independent nobility, which occurred daily, and almost hourly, gave rise to fresh bloodshed.

Where live the mountain chiefs who hold,
That plundering Lowland field and fold
Is aught but retribution true?
Seek other cause 'gainst Roderick Dhu."—

VIII.

Answered Fitz-James—"And, if I sought,
Think'st thou no other could be brought?
What deem ye of my path way-laid,
My life given o'er to ambuscade?"
"As of a meed to rashness due:
Hadst thou sent warning fair and true,—
I seek my hound, or falcon strayed,
I seek, good faith, a Highland maid,—
Free hadst thou been to come and go;
But secret path marks secret foe.
Nor yet, for this, even as a spy,
Hadst thou, unheard, been doomed to die,
Save to fulfil an augury."—
"Well, let it pass; nor will I now
Fresh cause of enmity avow,
To chafe thy mood and cloud thy brow.
Enough, I am by promise tied
To match me with this man of pride:
Twice have I sought Clan-Alpine's glen
In peace; but when I come agen,
I come with banner, brand and bow,
As leader seeks his mortal foe.
For love-lorn swain, in lady's bower,
Ne'er panted for the appointed hour,
As I, until before me stand
This rebel Chieftain and his band."—

IX.

"Have then thy wish!"—he whistled shrill,
And he was answered from the hill;
Wild as the scream of the curlew,
From crag to crag the signal flew.
Instant, through copse and heath, arose
Bonnets, and spears, and bended bows;
On right, on left, above, below,
Sprung up at once the lurking foe;
From shingles grey their lances start,
The bracken-bush sends forth the dart,
The rushes and the willow-wand
Are bristling into axe and brand,
And every tuft of broom gives life
To plaided warrior armed for strife.
That whistle garrisoned the glen
At once with full five hundred men,
As if the yawning hill to heaven
A subterranean host had given.

Watching their leader's beck and will,
All silent there they stood and still;
Like the loose crags whose threatening mass
Lay tottering o'er the hollow pass,
As if an infant's touch could urge
Their headlong passage down the verge,
With step and weapon forward flung,
Upon the mountain-side they hung.
The mountaineer cast glance of pride
Along Benledi's living side,
Then fixed his eye and sable brow
Full on Fitz-James—"How say'st thou now?
These are Clan-Alpine's warriors true;
And, Saxon,—I am Roderick Dhu!"—

X.

Fitz-James was brave:—Though to his heart
The life-blood thrilled with sudden start,
He manned himself with dauntless air,
Returned the Chief his haughty stare,
His back against a rock he bore,
And firmly placed his foot before:—
"Come one, come all! this rock shall fly
From its firm base as soon as I!"—
Sir Roderick marked—and in his eyes
Respect was mingled with surprise,
And the stern joy which warriors feel
In foeman worthy of their steel.
Short space he stood—then waved his hand:
Down sunk the disappearing band;
Each warrior vanished where he stood,
In broom or bracken, heath or wood;
Sunk brand and spear and bended bow,
In osiers pale and copses low:
It seemed as if their mother Earth
Had swallowed up her warlike birth.
The wind's last breath had tossed in air
Pennon, and plaid, and plumage fair,—
The next but swept a lone hill-side,
Where heath and fern were waving wide;
The sun's last glance was glinted* back,
From spear and glaive, from targe and jack.—
The next, all unreflected, shone
On bracken green and cold grey stone.

XI.

Fitz-James looked round—yet scarce believed
The witness that his sight received;
Such apparition well might seem
Delusion of a dreadful dream.

* Reflected.

Sir Roderick in suspense he eyed,
And to his look the Chief replied,
"Fear nought—nay, that I need not say—
But—doubt not aught from mine array.
Thou art my guest;—I pledged my word
As far as Coilantogle ford:
Nor would I call a clansman's brand
For aid against one valiant hand,
Though on our strife lay every vale
Rent by the Saxon from the Gael.
So move we on;—I only meant
To show the reed on which you leant,
Deeming this path you might pursue
Without a pass from Roderick Dhu."*—
They moved:—I said Fitz-James was brave,
As ever knight that belted glaive;
Yet dare not say, that now his blood
Kept on its wont and tempered flood,
As, following Roderick's stride, he drew
That seeming lonesome pathway through,
Which yet, by fearful proof, was rife
With lances, that to take his life
Waited but signal from a guide,
So late dishonoured and defied.
Ever, by stealth, his eye sought round
The vanished guardians of the ground,
And still from copse and heather deep,
Fancy saw spear and broad-sword peep,
And in the plover's shrilly strain,
The signal whistle heard again.
Nor breathed he free till far behind
The pass was left; for then they wind
Along a wide and level green,
Where neither tree nor tuft was seen,
Nor rush, nor bush of broom was near,
To hide a bonnet or a spear.

XII.

The Chief in silence strode before,
And reached that torrent's sounding shore,
Which, daughter of three mighty lakes,
From Vennachar in silver breaks,
Sweeps through the plain, and ceaseless mines
On Bochastle the mouldering lines,
Where Rome, the Empress of the world,†
Of yore her eagle wings unfurled.

* This incident, like some other passages in the poem, illustrative of the character of the ancient Gael, is not imaginary, but borrowed from fact. The Highlanders, with the inconsistency of most nations in the same state, were alternately capable of great exertions of generosity, and of cruel revenge and perfidy.

† The torrent which discharges itself from Loch Vennachar, the

And here his course the Chieftain stayed,
Threw down his target and his plaid,
And to the lowland warrior said:—
"Bold Saxon! to his promise just,
Vich-Alpine has discharged his trust.
This murderous chief, this ruthless man,
This head of a rebellious clan,
Hath led thee safe, through watch and ward,
Far past Clan-Alpine's outmost guard.
Now, man to man, and steel to steel,
A chieftain's vengeance thou shalt feel.
See, here, all vantageless* I stand,
Armed, like thyself, with single brand;
For this is Coilantogle ford,
And thou must keep thee with thy sword."—

XIII.

The Saxon paused:—"I ne'er delayed,
When foeman bade me draw my blade;
Nay more, brave Chief, I vowed thy death:
Yet sure thy fair and generous faith,
And my deep debt for life preserved,
A better meed have well deserved:—
Can nought but blood our feud atone?
Are there no means?"—"No, Stranger, none!
And hear,—to fire thy flagging zeal,—
The Saxon cause rests on thy steel;
For thus spoke Fate by prophet bred
Between the living and the dead;
'Who spills the foremost foeman's life,
His party conquers in the strife.'"—
"Then, by my word," the Saxon said,
"The riddle is already read.
Seek yonder brake beneath the cliff—
There lies Red Murdoch, stark and stiff.
Thus Fate has solved her prophecy,
Then yield to Fate, and not to me.
To James, at Stirling, let us go,
When, if thou wilt, be still his foe,
Or if the King shall not agree,
To grant thee grace and favour free,

lowest and eastmost of the three lakes which form the scenery adjoining to the Trosachs, sweeps through a flat and extensive moor, called Bochastle. Upon a small eminence, called the *Dun* of Bochastle, and, indeed, on the plain itself, are some intrenchments which have been thought Roman. There is, adjacent to Callender, a sweet villa, the residence of Captain Fairfoul, entitled the Roman Camp.

* The duellists of former times did not always stand upon those punctilios respecting equality of arms which are now judged essential to fair combat. It is true, that in formal combats in the lists, the parties were, by the judges of the field, put as nearly as possible in the same circumstances. But in private duel it was often otherwise.

I plight mine honour, oath, and word,
That, to thy native strengths restored,
With each advantage shalt thou stand,
That aids thee now to guard thy land."—

XIV.

Dark lightning flashed from Roderick's eye—
"Soars thy presumption, then, so high,
Because a wretched kerne ye slew,
Homage to name to Roderick Dhu?
He yields not, he, to man nor Fate!
Thou add'st but fuel to my hate:—
My clansman's blood demands revenge.—
Not yet prepared?—By heaven, I change
My thought, and hold thy valour light
As that of some vain carpet-knight,
Who ill deserved my courteous care,
And whose best boast is but to wear
A braid of his fair lady's hair."—
"I thank thee, Roderick, for the word!
It nerves my heart, it steels my sword;
For I have sworn this braid to stain
In the best blood that warms thy vein.
Now, truce, farewell! and ruth begone!—
Yet think not that by thee alone,
Proud Chief! can courtesy be shown;
Though not from copse, or heath, or cairn,
Start at my whistle clansmen stern,
Of this small horn one feeble blast
Would fearful odds against thee cast.
But fear not—doubt not—which thou wilt—
We try this quarrel hilt to hilt."—
Then each at once his falchion drew,
Each on the ground his scabbard threw,
Each looked to sun, and stream, and plain,
As what they ne'er might see again;
Then foot, and point, and eye opposed,
In dubious strife they darkly closed.

XV.

Ill fared it then with Roderick Dhu,
That on the field his targe he threw,*
Whose brazen studs and tough bull-hide
Had death so often dashed aside;
For, trained abroad his arms to wield,
Fitz-James's blade was sword and shield;†

* A round target of light wood, covered with strong leather, and studded with brass or iron, was a necessary part of a Highlander's equipment. In charging regular troops, they received the thrust of the bayonet in this buckler, twisted it aside, and used the broad-sword against the encumbered soldier.

† The use of defensive armour, and particularly of the buckler or

He practised every pass and ward,
To thrust, to strike, to feint, to guard;
While, less expert, though stronger far,
The Gael maintained unequal war.
Three times in closing strife they stood,
And thrice the Saxon sword drank blood;
No stinted draught, no scanty tide,
The gushing flood the tartans dyed.
Fierce Roderick felt the fatal drain,
And showered his blows like wintry rain;
And, as firm rock, or castle-roof,
Against the winter shower is proof,
The foe, invulnerable still,
Foiled his wild rage by steady skill;
Till, at advantage ta'en, his brand
Forced Roderick's weapon from his hand,
And, backwards borne upon the lea,
Brought the proud Chieftain to his knee.

XVI.

"Now, yield thee, or, by Him who made
The world, thy heart's blood dyes my blade!"—
"Thy threats, thy mercy, I defy!
Let recreant yield who fears to die."—
Like adder darting from his coil,
Like wolf that dashes through the toil,
Like mountain-cat who guards her young,
Full at Fitz-James's throat he sprung,*
Received, but recked not of a wound,
And locked his arms his foeman round.—
Now, gallant Saxon, hold thine own!
No maiden's hand is round thee thrown!
That desperate grasp thy frame might feel
Through bars of brass and triple steel!—
They tug, they strain!—down, down, they go,
The Gael above, Fitz-James below.
The Chieftain's gripe his throat compressed,
His knee was planted in his breast:
His clotted locks he backward threw,
Across his brow his hand he drew,

target, was general in Queen Elizabeth's time, although that of the single rapier seems to have been occasionally practised much earlier.

* I have not ventured to render this duel so savagely desperate as that of the celebrated Sir Ewan of Lochiel, chief of the clan Cameron, called, from his sable complexion, Ewan Dhu. He was the last man in Scotland who maintained the royal cause during the great Civil War, and his constant incursions rendered him a very unpleasant neighbour to the republican garrison at Inverlochy, now Fort William. The governor of the fort detached a party of three hundred men to lay waste Lochiel's possessions, and cut down his trees; but, in a sudden and desperate attack made upon them by the chieftain with very inferior numbers, they were almost all cut to pieces. The skirmish is detailed in a curious memoir of Sir Ewan's life, printed in the appendix of Pennant's Scottish Tour.

From blood and mist to clear his sight,
Then gleamed aloft his dagger bright!—
—But hate and fury ill supplied
The stream of life's exhausted tide,
And all too late the advantage came,
To turn the odds of deadly game;
For, while the dagger gleamed on high,
Reeled soul and sense, reeled brain and eye.
Down came the blow! but in the heath
The erring blade found bloodless sheath.
The struggling foe may now unclasp,
The fainting Chief's relaxing grasp;
Unwounded from the dreadful close,
But breathless all, Fitz-James arose.

XVII.

He faltered, thanks to Heaven for life,
Redeemed, unhoped, from desperate strife;
Next on his foe his look he cast,
Whose every gasp appeared his last;
In Roderick's gore he dipped the braid,—
"Poor Blanche! thy wrongs are dearly paid;
Yet with thy foe, must die, or live,
The praise that Faith and Valour give."—
With that he blew a bugle note,
Undid the collar from his throat,
Unbonneted, and by the wave
Sate down his brow and hands to lave.
Then faint afar are heard the feet
Of rushing steeds in gallop fleet;
The sounds increase, and now are seen
Four mounted squires in Lincoln green;
Two who bear lance, and two who lead,
By loosened rein, a saddled steed;
Each onward held his headlong course,
And by Fitz-James reined up his horse,
With wonder viewed the bloody spot—
—"Exclaim not, gallants! question not.
You, Herbert and Luffness, alight,
And bind the wounds of yonder knight;
Let the grey palfrey bear his weight,
We destined for a fairer freight,
And bring him on to Stirling straight;
I will before at better speed,
To seek fresh horse and fitting weed.
The sun rides high;—I must be boune
To see the archer-game at noon;
But lightly Bayard clears the lea.—
De Vaux and Herries, follow me!

XVIII.

"Stand, Bayard, stand!"—the steed obeyed,
With arching neck and bended head,

And glancing eye, and quivering ear,
As if he loved his lord to hear.
No foot Fitz-James in stirrup stayed,
No grasp upon the saddle laid,
But wreathed his left hand in the mane
And lightly bounded from the plain,
Turned on the horse his armèd heel,
And stirred his courage with the steel.
Bounded the fiery steed in air,
The rider sate erect and fair,
Then, like a bolt, from steel cross-bow
Forth launched, along the plain they go.
They dashed that rapid torrent through,
And up Carhonie's hill they flew;
Still at the gallop pricked the Knight,
His merry-men followed as they might.
Along thy banks, swift Teith! they ride,
And in the race they mock thy tide;
Torry and Lendrick now are passed,
And Deanstown lies behind them cast!
They rise, the bannered towers of Doune,
They sink in distant woodland soon;
Blair Drummond sees the hoofs strike fire,
They sweep like breeze through Ochtertyre;
They mark just glance and disappear
The lofty brow of ancient Kier;
They bathe their coursers' sweltering sides,
Dark Forth! amid thy sluggish tides,
And on the opposing shore take ground,
With plash, with scramble, and with bound.
Right hand they leave thy cliffs, Craig-Forth,
And soon the bulwark of the North,
Grey Stirling, with her towers and town,
Upon their fleet career looked down.

XIX.

As up the flinty path they strained,
Sudden his steed the leader reined;
A signal to his squire he flung,
Who instant to his stirrup sprung:—
"Seest thou, De Vaux, yon woodsman grey
Who town-ward holds the rocky way,
Of stature tall and poor array?
Mark'st thou the firm, yet active stride,
With which he scales the mountain-side?
Know'st thou from whence he comes, or whom?"
"No, by my word;—a burly groom
He seems, who in the field or chase
A Baron's train would nobly grace."
"Out, out, De Vaux! can fear supply
And jealousy, no sharper eye?
Afar, ere to the hill he drew,
That stately form and step I knew:

Like form in Scotland is not seen,
Treads not such step on Scottish green.
'Tis James of Douglas, by Saint Serle!
The uncle of the banished Earl.
Away, away, to court, to show
The near approach of dreaded foe;
The king must stand upon his guard;
Douglas and he must meet prepared."—
Then right hand wheeled their steeds, and straight
They won the castle's postern gate.

XX.

The Douglas, who had bent his way
From Cambus-Kenneth's abbey grey,
Now, as he climbed the rocky shelf,
Held sad communion with himself:—
"Yes! all is true my fears could frame:
A prisoner lies the noble Græme,
And fiery Roderick soon will feel
The vengeance of the royal steel.
I, only I, can ward their fate,—
God grant the ransom come not late!
The Abbess hath her promise given,
My child shall be the bride of heaven;—
—Be pardoned one repining tear!
For He, who gave her, knows how dear,
How excellent—but that is by,
And now my business is to die.
—Ye towers! within whose circuit dread
A Douglas by his sovereign bled,
And thou, oh sad and fatal mound!*
That oft has heard the death-axe sound,
As on the noblest of the land
Fell the stern headsman's bloody hand,—
The dungeon, block, and nameless tomb
Prepare!—for Douglas seeks his doom!
—But hark! what blithe and jolly peal
Makes the Franciscan steeple reel?
And see! upon the crowded street,
In motley groups what masquers meet!
Banner and pageant, pipe and drum,
And merry morrice-dancers come.
I guess, by all this quaint array,
The burghers hold their sports to-day.†

* An eminence on the north-east of the castle, where state criminals were executed. Stirling was often polluted with noble blood.

† Every burgh of Scotland, of the least note, but more especially the considerable towns, had their solemn *play* or festival, when feats of archery were exhibited, and prizes distributed to those who excelled in wrestling, hurling the bar, and the other gymnastic exercises of the period. Stirling, a usual place of royal residence, was not likely to be deficient in pomp upon such occasions, especially since James V was very partial to them. His ready participation in these popular

James will be there;—he loves such show
Where the good yeoman bends his bow,
And the tough wrestler foils his foe,
As well as where, in proud career,
The high-born tilter shivers spear.
I'll follow to the Castle-park,
And play my prize;—King James shall mark,
If age has tamed these sinews stark,*
Whose force so oft, in happier days,
His boyish wonder loved to praise."—

XXI.

The Castle gates were open flung,
The quivering drawbridge rocked and rung,
And echoed loud the flinty street
Beneath the coursers' clattering feet,
As slowly down the steep descent
Fair Scotland's King and nobles went,
While all along the crowded way
Was jubilee and loud hazza.
And ever James was bending low,
To his white jennet's saddle-bow,
Doffing his cap to city dame,
Who smiled and blushed for pride and shame:
And well the simperer might be vain,—
He chose the fairest of the train.
Gravely he greets each city sire,
Commends each pageant's quaint attire,
Gives to the dancers thanks aloud,
And smiles and nods upon the crowd,
Who rend the heavens with their acclaims,
"Long live the Commons' King, King James!"
Behind the King thronged peer and knight,
And noble dame and damsel bright,
Whose fiery steeds ill brooked the stay
Of the steep street and crowded way.
—But in the train you might discern
Dark lowering brow and visage stern:
There nobles mourned their pride restrained,
And the mean burghers' joys disdained;
And chiefs, who, hostage for their clan,
Were each from home a banished man,
There thought upon their own grey tower,
Their waving woods, their feudal power,
And deemed themselves a shameful part
Of pageant, which they cursed in heart.

amusements was one cause of his acquiring the title of King of the Commons, or, *Rex Plebeiorum*, as Lesley has Latinized it. The usual prize to the best shooter was a silver arrow. Such a one is preserved at Selkirk and at Peebles. At Dumfries, a silver gun was substituted, and the contention transferred to fire arms.

* Stout.—*Halliwell.*

XXII.

Now in the Castle-park, drew out
Their chequered bands the joyous rout.
There morricers, with bell at heel,
And blade in hand, their mazes wheel;
But chief, beside the butts, there stand
Bold Robin Hood and all his band,*—
Friar Tuck with quarter-staff and cowl,
Old Scathelocke with his surly scowl,
Maid Marian, fair as ivory bone,
Scarlet, and Mutch, and Little John;
Their bugles challenge all that will,
In archery to prove their skill.
The Douglas bent a bow of might,—
His first shaft centred in the white,
And when in turn he shot again,
His second split the first in twain.
From the King's hand must Douglas take
A silver dart, the archers' stake;
Fondly he watched, with watery eye,
Some answering glance of sympathy,—
No kind emotion made reply!
Indifferent as to archer wight,
The Monarch gave the arrow bright.†

XXIII.

Now, clear the ring! for, hand to hand,
The manly wrestlers take their stand.
Two o'er the rest superior rose,
And proud demanded mightier foes,
Nor called in vain; for Douglas came.
—For life, is Hugh of Larbert lame;
Scarce better John of Alloa's fare,
Whom senseless home his comrades bear.
Prize of the wrestling match, the King
To Douglas gave a golden ring,‡

* The exhibition of this renowned Outlaw and his band was a favourite frolic at such festivals as we are describing. It would seem, from the complaints of the General Assembly of the Kirk, that these profane festivities were continued down to 1592. Bold Robin was, to say the least, equally successful in maintaining his ground against the reformed clergy of England: for the simple and evangelical Latimer complains of coming to a country church, where the people refused to hear him, because it was Robin Hood's day; and his mitre and rochet were fain to give way to the village pastime.

† The Douglas of the poem is an imaginary person, a supposed uncle of the earl of Angus. But the king's behaviour during an unexpected interview with the laird of Kilspindie, one of the banished Douglasses, under circumstances similar to those in the text, is imitated from a real story told by Hume of Gods-croft.

‡ The usual prize of a wrestling was a ram and a ring; but the animal would have embarrassed my story.

While coldly glanced his eye of blue,
As frozen drop of wintry dew.
Douglas would speak, but in his breast
His struggling soul his words suppressed:
Indignant then he turned him where
Their arms the brawny yeomen bare,
To hurl the massive bar in air.
When each his utmost strength had shown,
The Douglas rent an earth-fast stone
From its deep bed, then heaved it high,
And sent the fragment through the sky,
A rood beyond the farthest mark;—
And still in Stirling's royal park,
The grey-haired sires who know the past,
To strangers point the Douglas-cast,
And moralize on the decay
Of Scottish strength in modern day.

XXIV.

The vale with loud applauses rang,
The Ladies' Rock sent back the clang;
The King, with look unmoved, bestowed
A purse well filled with pieces broad.
Indignant smiled the Douglas proud,
And threw the gold among the crowd,
Who now, with anxious wonder, scan,
And sharper glance, the dark grey man;
Till whispers rose among the throng,
That heart so free, and hand so strong,
Must to the Douglas blood belong:
The old men marked, and shook the head,
To see his hair with silver spread,
And winked aside, and told each son
Of feats upon the English done,
Ere Douglas of the stalwart hand
Was exiled from his native land.
The women praised his stately form,
Though wrecked by many a winter's storm:
The youth, with awe and wonder, saw
His strength surpassing nature's law.
Thus judged, as is their wont, the crowd,
Till murmurs rose to clamours loud.
But not a glance from that proud ring
Of peers who circled round the King,
With Douglas held communion kind,
Or called the banished man to mind;
No, not from those who, at the chase,
Once held his side the honoured place,
Begirt his board, and, in the field,
Found safety underneath his shield;
For he, whom royal eyes disown,
When was his form to courtiers known!

XXV.

The Monarch saw the gambols flag,
And bade let loose a gallant stag,
Whose pride, the holiday to crown,
Two favourite greyhounds should pull down,
That venison free, and Bordeaux wine,
Might serve the archery to dine.
But Lufra,—whom from Douglas' side
Nor bribe nor threat could e'er divide,
The fleetest hound in all the North,—
Brave Lufra saw, and darted forth.
She left the royal hounds mid-way,
And, dashing on the antlered prey,
Sunk her sharp muzzle in his flank,
And deep the flowing life-blood drank.
The King's stout huntsman saw the sport
By strange intruder broken short,
Came up, and, with his leash unbound,
In anger struck the noble hound.
—The Douglas had endured, that morn,
The King's cold look, the nobles' scorn,
And last, and worst to spirit proud,
Had borne the pity of the crowd;
But Lufra had been fondly bred,
To share his board, to watch his bed,
And oft would Ellen, Lufra's neck,
In maiden glee, with garlands deck:
They were such playmates, that with name
Of Lufra, Ellen's image came.
His stifled wrath is brimming high,
In darkened brow and flashing eye;
As waves before the bark divide,
The crowd gave way before his stride;
Needs but a buffet and no more,
The groom lies senseless in his gore.
Such blow no other hand could deal,
Though gauntleted, in glove of steel.

XXVI.

Then clamoured loud the royal train,*
And brandished swords and staves amain,
But stern the Baron's warning—"Back!
Back on your lives, ye menial pack!
Beware the Douglas.—Yes! behold,
King James, the Douglas, doomed of old,
And vainly sought for near and far,
A victim to atone the war,
A willing victim, now attends,
Nor craves thy grace but for his friends."—

* In the first edition this line stands—

"Clamoured his comrades of the train."

"Thus is my clemency repaid?
Presumptuous Lord!" the Monarch said;
"Of thy mis-proud ambitious clan,
Thou, James of Bothwell, wert the man,
The only man, in whom a foe
My woman-mercy would not know:
But shall a Monarch's presence brook
Injurious blow, and haughty look?—
What ho! the Captain of our Guard!
Give the offender fitting ward.—
Break off the sports!"—for tumult rose,
And yeomen 'gan to bend their bows—
"Break off the sports!" he said, and frowned,
"And bid our horsemen clear the ground."—

XXVII.

Then uproar wild and misarray
Marred the fair form of festal day.
The horsemen pricked among the crowd,
Repelled by threats and insult loud;
To earth are borne the old and weak,
The timorous fly, the women shriek;
With flint, with shaft, with staff, with bar,
The hardier urge tumultuous war.
At once round Douglas darkly sweep
The royal spears in circle deep,
And slowly scale the pathway steep;
While on their rear in thunder pour
The rabble with disordered roar.
With grief the noble Douglas saw
The commons rise against the law,
And to the leading soldier said,
"Sir John of Hyndford! 'twas my blade
That knighthood on thy shoulder laid;
For that good deed, permit me then
A word with these misguided men.—

XXVIII.

"Hear, gentle friends! ere yet, for me,
Ye break the bands of fealty.
My life, my honour, and my cause,
I tender free to Scotland's laws;
Are these so weak as must require
The aid of your misguided ire?
Or, if I suffer causeless wrong,
Is then my selfish rage so strong,
My sense of public weal so low,
That, for mean vengeance on a foe,
Those chords of love I should unbind,
Which knit my country and my kind?
Oh no! Believe, in yonder tower
It will not soothe my captive hour,

To know those spears our foes should dread,
For me in kindred gore are red:
To know, in fruitless brawl begun,
For me, that mother wails her son;
For me, that widow's mate expires,
For me, that orphans weep their sires,
That patriots mourn insulted laws,
And curse the Douglas for the cause.
O let your patience ward such ill,
And keep your right to love me still!"—

XXIX.

The crowd's wild fury sunk again
In tears, as tempests melt in rain.
With lifted hands and eyes, they prayed
For blessings on his generous head,
Who for his country felt alone,
And prized her blood beyond his own.
Old men, upon the verge of life,
Blessed him who stayed the civil strife;
And mothers held their babes on high,
The self-devoted chief to spy,
Triumphant over wrong and ire,
To whom the prattlers owed a sire:
Even the rough soldier's heart was moved;
As if behind some bier beloved,
With trailing arms and drooping head,
The Douglas up the hill he led,
And at the castle's battled verge,
With sighs, resigned his honoured charge.

XXX.

The offended Monarch rode apart,
With bitter thought and swelling heart,
And would not now vouchsafe again
Through Stirling streets to lead his train.
"O Lennox, who would wish to rule
This changeling crowd, this common fool,
Hear'st thou," he said, "the loud acclaim,
With which they shout the Douglas name?
With like acclaim, the vulgar throat
Strained for King James their morning note,
With like acclaim they hailed the day
When first I broke the Douglas sway;
And like acclaim would Douglas greet,
If he could hurl me from my seat.
Who o'er the herd would wish to reign,
Fantastic, fickle, fierce, and vain?
Vain as the leaf upon the stream,
And fickle as a changeful dream;
Fantastic as a woman's mood,
And fierce as Frenzy's fevered blood.

Thou many-headed monster-thing,
O who would wish to be thy king!—

XXXI.

"But soft! what messenger of speed
Spurs hitherward his panting steed?
I guess his cognizance afar—
What from our cousin, John of Mar?"—
"He prays, my liege, your sports keep bound
Within the safe and and guarded ground:
For some foul purpose yet unknown,—
Most sure for evil to the throne,—
The outlawed Chieftain, Roderick Dhu,
Has summoned his rebellious crew;
'Tis said, in James of Bothwell's aid
These loose banditti stand arrayed.
The Earl of Mar, this morn, from Doune,
To break their muster marched, and soon
Your grace will hear of battle fought;
But earnestly the Earl besought,
Till for such danger he provide,
With scanty train you will not ride."—

XXXII.

"Thou warn'st me I have done amiss,—
I should have earlier looked to this:
I lost it in this bustling day.
—Retrace with speed thy former way·
Spare not for spoiling of thy steed,
The best of mine shall be thy meed.
Say to our faithful Lord of Mar,
We do forbid the intended war;
Roderick, this morn, in single fight,
Was made our prisoner by a knight,
And Douglas hath himself and cause
Submitted to our kingdom's laws.
The tidings of their leaders lost
Will soon dissolve the mountain-host,
Nor would we that the vulgar feel,
For their Chief's crimes, avenging steel.
Bear Mar our message, Braco, fly."—
He turned his steed,—"My liege, I hie,
Yet, ere I cross this lily lawn,
I fear the broad-swords will be drawn."—
The turf the flying courser spurned,
And to his towers the King returned.

XXXIII.

Ill with King James's mood that day
Suited gay feast and minstrel lay;
Soon were dismissed the courtly throng,
And soon cut short the festal song.

Nor less upon the saddened town
The evening sunk in sorrow down;
The burghers spoke of civil jar,
Of rumoured feuds and mountain war,
Of Moray, Mar, and Roderick Dhu,
All up in arms:—the Douglas too,
They mourned him pent within the hold
"Where stout Earl William* was of old;"—
And there his word the speaker stayed,
And finger on his lip he laid,
Or pointed to his dagger-blade.
But jaded horsemen from the west,
At evening to the castle pressed;
And busy talkers said they bore
Tidings of fight on Katrine's shore;
At noon the deadly fray begun,
And lasted till the set of sun.
Thus giddy rumour shook the town,
Till closed the Night her pennons brown.

CANTO SIXTH.

THE GUARD-ROOM.

I.

The sun, awakening, through the smoky air
Of the dark city casts a sullen glance,
Rousing each caitiff to his task of care,
Of sinful man the sad inheritance;
Summoning revellers from the lagging dance,
Scaring the prowling robber to his den;†
Gilding on battled tower the warder's lance,
And warning student pale to leave his pen,
And yield his drowsy eyes to the kind nurse of men.

What various scenes, and O! what scenes of woe,
Are witnessed by that red and struggling beam!
The fevered patient, from his pallet low,
Through crowded hospital beholds it stream;
The ruined maiden trembles at its gleam,
The debtor wakes to thoughts of gyve and jail,
The love-lorn wretch starts from tormenting dream,
The wakeful mother, by the glimmering pale,
Trims her sick infant's couch, and soothes his feeble wail.

* Stabbed by James II. in Stirling Castle.
† In the first edition—

"And scaring prowling robbers to their den."

II.

At dawn the towers of Stirling rang
With soldier-step and weapon-clang,
While drums, with rolling note, foretell
Relief to weary sentinel.
Through narrow loop and casement barred,
The sunbeams sought the Court of Guard,
And, struggling with the smoky air,
Deadened the torches yellow glare.
In comfortless alliance shone
The lights through arch of blackened stone,
And showed wild shapes in garb of war,
Faces deformed with beard and scar,
All haggard from the midnight watch,
And fevered with the stern debauch;
For the oak table's massive board,
Flooded with wine, with fragments stored,
And beaker's drained, and cups o'erthrown,
Showed in what sport the night had flown.
Some, weary, snored on floor and bench;
Some laboured still their thirst to quench;
Some, chilled with watching, spread their hands
O'er the huge chimney's dying brands,
While round them, or beside them flung,
At every step their harness rung.

III.

These drew not for their fields the sword,
Like tenants of a feudal lord,
Nor owned the patriarchal claim
Of chieftain in their leader's name:*
Adventurers they, from far who roved,
To live by battle which they loved.
There the Italian's clouded face,
The swarthy Spaniard's there you trace;
The mountain-loving Switzer there
More freely breathed in mountain air;
The Fleming there despised the soil,
That paid so ill the labourer's toil;
Their rolls showed French and German name,
And merry England's exiles came,

* The Scottish armies consisted chiefly of the nobility and barons, with their vassals, who held lands under them, for military service by themselves and their tenants. The patriarchal influence exercised by the heads of clans in the Highlands and Borders was of a different nature, and sometimes at variance with feudal principles. It flowed from the *patria potestas*, exercised by the chieftain as representing the original father of the whole name, and was often obeyed in contradiction to the feudal superior. James V. seems first to have introduced, in addition to the militia furnished from these sources, the service of a small number of mercenaries, who formed a body guard, called the Footband.

To share, with ill-concealed disdain,
Of Scotland's pay the scanty gain.
All brave in arms, well trained to wield
The heavy halbert, brand, and shield;
In camps licentious, wild, and bold;
In pillage, fierce, and uncontrolled;
And now, by holytide and feast,
From rules of discipline released.

IV.

They held debate of bloody fray,
Fought 'twixt Loch-Katrine and Achray.
Fierce was their speech, and, 'mid their words,
Their hands oft grappled to their swords;
Nor sunk their tone to spare the ear
Of wounded comrades groaning near,
Whose mangled limbs, and bodies gored,
Bore token of the mountain sword,
Though, neighbouring to the Court of Guard,
Their prayers and feverish wails were heard;—
Sad burden to the ruffian joke,
And savage oath by fury spoke!—
At length up-started John of Brent,
A yeoman from the banks of Trent;
A stranger to respect or fear,
In peace a chaser of the deer,
In host a hardy mutineer,
But still the boldest of the crew,
When deed of danger was to do.
He grieved, that day their games cut short,
And marred the dicers' brawling sport,
And shouted loud, "Renew the bowl!
And, while a merry catch I troll,
Let each the buxom chorus bear,
Like brethren of the brand and spear."—

V.

SOLDIER'S SONG.

Our vicar still preaches that Peter and Poule
Laid a swinging long curse on the bonny brown bowl,
That there's wrath and despair in the jolly black jack,
And seven deadly sins in a flagon of sack;
Yet whoop, Barnaby! off with thy liquor,
Drink upsees* out, and a fig for the vicar!

Our vicar he calls it damnation to sip
The ripe ruddy dew of a woman's dear lip,
Says, that Beelzebub lurks in her kerchief so sly,
And Apollyon shoots darts from her merry black eye;
Yet, whoop, Jack! kiss Gillian the quicker,
Till she bloom like a rose, and a fig for the vicar!

* A Bacchanalian interjection borrowed from the Dutch.

Our vicar thus preaches—and why should he not?
For the dues of his cure are the placket and pot;
And 'tis right of his office poor laymen to lurch,
Who infringe the domains of our good mother Church.
Yet whoop, bully-boys! off with your liquor,
Sweet Marjorie's the word, and a fig for the vicar!

VI.

The warder's challenge heard without,
Stayed in mid roar the merry shout.
A soldier to the portal went,—
"Here is old Bertram, sirs, of Ghent;
And, beat for jubilee the drum!
A maid and minstrel with him come."—
Bertram, a Fleming, grey, and scarred,
Was entering now the Court of Guard,
A harper with him, and, in plaid
All muffled close, a mountain maid,
Who backward shrank to 'scape the view
Of the loose scene and boisterous crew.
"What news?" they roared.—"I only know
From noon till eve we fought with foe,
As wild and as untameable
As the rude mountains where they dwell.
On both sides store of blood is lost,
Nor much success can either boast."—
"But whence thy captives, friend? such spoil
As theirs must needs reward thy toil.
Old dost thou wax, and wars grow sharp;
Thou now hast glee-maiden and harp,
Get thee an ape, and trudge the land,
The leader of a juggler band."*—

VII.

"No, comrade;—no such fortune mine.
After the fight, these sought our line,
That aged harper and the girl,
And, having audience of the Earl,
Mar bade I should purvey them steed,
And bring them hitherward with speed.
Forbear your mirth and rude alarm,
For none shall do them shame or harm."—
"Hear ye his boast!" cried John of Brent,
Ever to strife and jangling bent,—

* The jongleurs or jugglers, as we learn from the elaborate work of the late Mr. Strutt, on the "Sports and Pastimes of the People of England," used to call in the aid of various assistants, to render these performances as captivating as possible. The glee maiden was a necessary attendant. Her duty was tumbling and dancing; and therefore the Anglo-Saxon version of Saint Mark's Gospel states Herodias to have vaulted or tumbled before King Herod. In Scotland, these poor creatures seem, even at a late period, to have been bondswomen to their masters.

"Shall he strike doe beside our lodge,
And yet the jealous niggard grudge
To pay the forester his fee?
I'll have my share howe'er it be,
Despite of Moray, Mar, or thee."—
Bertram his forward step withstood;
And, burning in his vengeful mood,
Old Allan, though unfit for strife,
Laid hand upon his dagger-knife;
But Ellen boldly stepped between,
And dropped at once the tartan screen—
So from his morning cloud, appears
The sun of May, through summer tears.
The savage soldiery, amazed,
As on descended angel gazed;
Even hardy Brent, abashed and tamed,
Stood half admiring, half ashamed.

VIII.

Boldly she spoke,—"Soldiers, attend!
My father was the soldier's friend;
Cheered him in camps, in marches led,
And with him in the battle bled.
Not from the valiant, or the strong,
Should exile's daughter suffer wrong."—
Answered De Brent, most forward still
In every feat or good or ill,
"I shame me of the part I played:
And thou an outlaw's child, poor maid!
An outlaw I by Forest laws,
And merry Needwood knows the cause.
Poor Rose,—if Rose be living now,"—
He wiped his iron eye and brow,—
"Must bear such age, I think, as thou.—
Hear ye, my mates;—I go to call
The Captain of our watch to hall:
There lies my halbert on the floor;
And he that steps my halbert o'er,
To do the maid injurious part,
My shaft shall quiver in his heart!
Beware loose speech, or jesting rough:
Ye all know John de Brent. Enough."—

IX.

Their Captain came, a gallant young,—
(Of Tullibardine's house he sprung:)
Nor wore he yet the spurs of knight;
Gay was his mien, his humour light,
And though by courtesy controlled,
Forward his speech, his bearing bold.
The high-born maiden ill could brook
The scanning of his curious look.

And dauntless eye;—and yet in sooth,
Young Lewis was a generous youth;
But Ellen's lovely face and mien,
Ill-suited to the garb and scene,
Might lightly bear construction strange,
And give loose fancy scope to range.
—"Welcome to Stirling towers, fair maid!
Come ye to seek a champion's aid,
On palfrey white, with harper hoar,
Like errant damosel of yore?
Does thy high guest a knight require,
Or may the venture suit a squire?"—
Her dark eye flashed;—she paused and sighed,—
"O what have I to do with pride!—
Through scenes of sorrow, shame, and strife,
A suppliant for a father's life,
I crave an audience of the King.
Behold, to back my suit, a ring,
The royal pledge of grateful claims,
Given by the Monarch to Fitz-James."

X.

The signet ring young Lewis took,
With deep respect and altered look;
And said,—"This ring our duties own;
And pardon, if, to worth unknown,
In semblance mean obscurely veiled,
Lady, in aught my folly failed.
Soon as the day flings wide his gates,
The King shall know what suitor waits.
Please you, meanwhile, in fitting bower,
Repose you till his waking hour;
Female attendance shall obey
Your hest, for service or array.
Permit I marshal you the way."—
But, ere she followed, with the grace
And open bounty of her race,
She bade her slender purse be shared
Among the soldiers of the guard.
The rest with thanks their guerdon took;
But Brent, with shy and awkward look,
On the reluctant maiden's hold
Forced bluntly back the proffered gold;—
"Forgive a haughty English heart,
And O forget its ruder part!
The vacant purse shall be my share,
Which in my barret-cap I'll bear,
Perchance, in jeopardy of war,
Where gayer crests may keep afar."—
With thanks,—'twas all she could,—the maid
His rugged courtesy repaid.

XI.

When Ellen forth with Lewis went,
Allan made suit to John of Brent:—
"My lady safe, oh let your grace
Give me to see my master's face;
His minstrel I,—to share his doom
Bound from the cradle to the tomb.
Tenth in descent, since first my sires
Waked for his noble house their lyres,
Nor one of all the race was known
But prized its weal above their own.
With the Chief's birth begins our care;
Our harp must soothe the infant heir,
Teach the youth tales of fight, and grace
His earliest feat of field or chase;
In peace, in war, our rank we keep,
We cheer his board, we soothe his sleep,
Nor leave him till we pour our verse,
A doleful tribute! o'er his hearse.
Then let me share his captive lot;
It is my right,—deny it not!"—
"Little we reck," said John of Brent,
"We Southern men, of long descent;
Nor wot we how a name—a word—
Makes clansmen vassals to a lord:
Yet kind my noble landlord's part,—
God bless the house of Beaudesert!
And, but I loved to drive the deer,
More than to guide the labouring steer,
I had not dwelt an outcast here.
Come, good old Minstrel, follow me;
Thy Lord and Chieftain shalt thou see."—

XII.

Then, from a rusted iron hook,
A bunch of ponderous keys he took,
Lighted a torch, and Allan led
Through grated arch and passage dread.
Portals they passed, where, deep within,
Spoke prisoner's moan and fetters' din;
Through rugged vaults, where, loosely stored,
Lay wheel, and axe, and headsman's sword,
And many an hideous engine grim,
For wrenching joint, and crushing limb,
By artists formed, who deemed it shame
And sin to give their work a name.
They halted at a low-browed porch,
And Brent to Allan gave the torch,
While bolt and chain he backward rolled,
And made the bar unhasp its hold.
They entered:—'twas a prison-room
Of stern security and gloom,

Yet not a dungeon; for the day
Through lofty gratings found its way,
And rude and antique garniture
Decked the sad walls and oaken* floor;
Such as the rugged days of old,†
Deemed fit for captive noble's hold.
"Here," said De Brent, "thou mayst remain;—
Till the Leech visit him again.‡
Strict is his charge, the warders tell,
To tend the noble prisoner well."—
Retiring then, the bolt he drew,
And the lock's murmurs growled anew.
Roused at the sound, from lowly bed
A captive feebly raised his head;
The wondering Minstrel looked, and knew
Not his dear lord, but Roderick Dhu!
For, come from where Clan-Alpine fought,
They, erring, deemed the Chief he sought.

XIII.

As the tall ship, whose lofty prore
Shall never stem the billows more,
Deserted by her gallant band,
Amid the breakers lies astrand,—
So, on his couch, lay Roderick Dhu!
And oft his fevered limbs he threw
In toss abrupt, as when her sides
Lie rocking in the advancing tides,
That shake her frame with ceaseless beat,
Yet cannot heave her from her seat;—
O! how unlike her course on sea!
Or his free step on hill and lea!—
Soon as the Minstrel he could scan,
—"What of thy lady?—of my clan?—
My mother?—Douglas?—tell me all!—
Have they been ruined in my fall?
Ah, yes! or wherefore art thou here!
Yet speak,—speak boldly,—do not fear."
(For Allan, who his mood well knew,
Was choked with grief and terror too.)
"Who fought?—who fled?—Old man, be brief;—
Some might—for they had lost their Chief.
Who basely live?—who bravely died?"
"O, calm thee, Chief!" the Minstrel cried,
"Ellen is safe;"—"For that, thank Heaven!"—
"And hopes are for the Douglas given;
The Lady Margaret too is well,
And, for thy clan,—on field or fell,

* First edition, "flinty."
† This and the next line are not found in the first edition.
‡ This and the two following lines are not found in the first edition.

Has never harp of minstrel told,
Of combat fought so true and bold.
Thy stately pine is yet unbent,
Though many a goodly bough is rent."—

XIV.

The Chieftain reared his form on high,
And fever's fire was in his eye;
But ghastly, pale, and livid streaks
Chequered his swarthy brow and cheeks.
—"Hark, Minstrel! I have heard thee play
With measure bold on festal day,
In yon lone isle, . . . again where ne'er
Shall harper play, or warrior hear, ...
That stirring air that peals on high,
O'er Dermid's* race our victory.—
Strike it!—and then, (for well thou canst,)
Free from thy minstrel-spirit glanced,
Fling me the picture of the fight,
When met my clan the Saxon might.
I'll listen, till my fancy hears
The clang of swords, the crash of spears!
These grates, these walls, shall vanish then,
For the fair field of fighting men,
And my free spirit burst away,
As if it soared from battle fray."—
The trembling bard with awe obeyed,—
Slow on the harp his hand he laid;
But soon remembrance of the sight
He witnessed from the mountain's height,
With what old Bertram told at night,
Awakened the full power of song,
And bore him in career along;—
As shallop launched on river's tide,
That slow and fearful leaves the side,
But, when it feels the middle stream,
Drives downward swift as lightning's beam.

XV.

BATTLE OF BEAL' AN DUINE.†

"The Minstrel came once more to view
The eastern ridge of Ben-venue,

* There are several instances, at least in tradition, of persons so much attached to particular tunes, as to require to hear them on their death-bed. Such an anecdote is mentioned by the late Mr. Riddel of Glenriddle, in his collection of Border tunes, respecting an air called the "Dandling of the Bairns," for which a certain Gallovidian laird is said to have evinced this strong mark of partiality. It is popularly told of a famous freebooter, that he composed the tune known by the name of Macpherson's Rant while under sentence of death, and played it at the gallows-tree.

† A skirmish actually took place at a pass thus called in the Trosachs,

For, ere he parted, he would say,
Farewell to lovely Loch-Achray—
Where shall he find, in foreign land,
So lone a lake, so sweet a strand!—
There is no breeze upon the fern,
No ripple on the lake,
Upon her eyrie nods the erne,
The deer has sought the brake;
The small birds will not sing aloud,
The springing trout lies still,
So darkly glooms yon thunder-cloud,
That swathes, as with a purple shroud,
Benledi's distant hill.
Is it the thunder's solemn sound
That mutters deep and dread,
Or echoes from the groaning ground
The warrior's measured tread?
Is it the lightning's quivering glance
That on the thicket streams,
Or do they flash on spear and lance
The sun's retiring beams?
—I see the dagger-crest of Mar,
I see the Moray's silver star,
Wave o'er the cloud of Saxon war,
That up the lake comes winding far!
To hero boune for battle strife,
Or bard of martial lay,
'Twere worth ten years of peaceful life,
One glance at their array!

XVI.

"Their light-armed archers far and near
Surveyed the tangled ground,
Their centre ranks, with pike and spear
A twilight forest frowned,
Their barbèd horsemen, in the rear,
The stern battalia crowned.
No cymbal clashed, no clarion rang,
Still were the pipe and drum;
Save heavy tread, and armour's clang,
The sullen march was dumb.
There breathed no wind their crests to shake,
Or wave their flags abroad;
Scarce the frail aspen seemed to quake,
That shadowed o'er their road.
Their vaward* scouts no tidings bring,
Can rouse no lurking foe,
Nor spy a trace of living thing,
Save when they stirred the roe;

and closed with the remarkable incident mentioned in the text. It was greatly posterior in date to the reign of James V.

*Those in advance of the main army.

The host moves, like a deep sea-wave,
Where rise no rocks its pride to brave,
High-swelling, dark, and slow.
The lake is passed, and now they gain
A narrow and a broken plain,
Before the Trosach's rugged jaws;
And here the horse and spear-men pause,
While, to explore the dangerous glen,
Dive through the pass the archer-men.

XVII.

"At once there rose so wild a yell
Within that dark and narrow dell,
As all the fiends, from heaven that fell,
Had pealed the banner-cry of hell!
Forth from the pass in tumult driven,
Like chaff before the wind of heaven,
The archery appear:
For life! for life! their flight they ply—
And shriek, and shout, and battle-cry,
And plaids and bonnets waving high,
And broad-swords flashing to the sky,
Are maddening in their rear.
Onward they drive in dreadful race,
Pursuers and pursued;
Before that tide of flight and chase,
How shall it keep its rooted place,
The spearmen's twilight wood?
—'Down, down,' cried Mar, 'your lances down!
Bear back both friend and foe!'
Like reeds before the tempest's frown,
That serried grove of lances brown
At once lay levelled low;
And closely shouldering side to side,
The bristling ranks the onset bide.—
—'We'll quell the savage mountaineer,
As their Tinchel* cows the game!
They come as fleet as forest deer,
We'll drive them back as tame.'

XVIII.

"Bearing before them, in their course,
The relics of the archer force,
Like wave with crest of sparkling foam,
Right onward did Clan-Alpine come.
Above the tide, each broad-sword bright
Was brandishing like beam of light,
Each targe was dark below;

* A circle of sportsmen, who, by surrounding a great space, and gradually narrowing, brought immense quantities of deer together, which usually made desperate efforts to break through the *Tinchel*.

And with the ocean's mighty swing,
When heaving to the tempest's wing,
They hurled them on the foe.
I heard the lance's shivering crash,
As when the whirlwind rends the ash;
I heard the broad-sword's deadly clang,
As if a hundred anvils rang!
But Moray wheeled his rear-ward rank
Of horsemen on Clan-Alpine's flank.
—'My banner-man, advance!
I see,' he cried, 'their column shake.
Now, gallants! for your ladies' sake,
Upon them with the lance!'—
The horsemen dashed among the rout,
As deer break through the broom;
Their steeds are stout, their swords are out,
They soon make lightsome room.
Clan-Alpine's best are backward borne,—
Where, where, was Roderick then!
One blast upon his bugle horn
Were worth a thousand men.
And refluent through the pass of fear
The battle's tide was poured;
Vanished the Saxon's struggling spear,
Vanished the mountain-sword.
As Bracklinn's chasm, so black and steep,
Receives her roaring linn,
As the dark caverns of the deep
Suck the wild whirlpool in,
So did the deep and darksome pass
Devour the battle's mingled mass;
None linger now upon the plain,
Save those who ne'er shall fight again.

XIX.

"Now westward rolls the battle's din,
That deep and doubling pass within.
Minstrel, away! the work of fate
Is bearing on: its issue wait,
Where the rude Trosach's dread defile
Opens on Katrine's lake and isle.
Grey Ben-venue I soon repassed,
Loch-Katrine lay beneath me cast.
The sun is set—the clouds are met,
The lowering scowl of heaven
An inky hue of livid blue
To the deep lake has given;
Strange gusts of wind from mountain glen
Swept o'er the lake, then sunk agen.
I heeded not the eddying surge,
Mine eye but saw the Trosach's gorge,

Mine ear but heard that sullen sound,
Which like an earthquake shook the ground,
And spoke the stern and desperate strife
That parts not but with parting life,
Seeming, to minstrel-ear, to toll
The dirge of many a passing soul.
Nearer it comes—the dim-wood glen
The martial flood disgorged agen,
But not in mingled tide;
The plaided warriors of the North
High on the mountain thunder forth,
And overhang its side;
While by the lake below appears
The darkening cloud of Saxon spears.
At weary bay each shattered band,
Eyeing their foemen, sternly stand;
Their banners stream like tattered sail,
That flings its fragments to the gale,
And broken arms and disarray
Marked the fell havoc of the day.

XX.

"Viewing the mountain's ridge askance,
The Saxons stood in sullen trance,
Till Moray pointed with his lance,
And cried—'Behold yon isle!—
See! none are left to guard its strand
But women weak, that wring the hand:
'Tis there of yore the robber band
Their booty wont to pile:—
My purse, with bonnet-pieces* store,
To him will swim a bow-shot o'er,
And loose a shallop from the shore.
Lightly we'll tame the war-wolf then,
Lords of his mate, and brood, and den.'—
Forth from the ranks a spearman sprung,
On earth his casque and corslet rung,
He plunged him in the wave:—
All saw the deed—the purpose knew,
And to their clamours Ben-venue
A mingled echo gave;
The Saxons shout, their mate to cheer,
The helpless females scream for fear,
And yells for rage the mountaineer.
'Twas then, as by the outcry riven,
Poured down at once the lowering heaven;
A whirlwind swept Loch-Katrine's breast,
Her billows reared their snowy crest.

* A gold coin of James V., the most beautiful of the Scottish series; so called because the effigies of the king is represented wearing a bonnet.—*Jamieson.*

Well for the swimmer swelled they high,
To mar the Highland marksman's eye;
For round him showered, 'mid rain and hail,
The vengeful arrows of the Gael.—
In vain.—He nears the isle—and lo!
His hand is on a shallop's bow.
—Just then a flash of lightning came,
It tinged the waves and strand with flame;—
I marked Duncraggan's widowed dame,
Behind an oak I saw her stand,
A naked dirk gleamed in her hand:—
It darkened,—but amid the moan
Of waves I heard a dying groan;—
Another flash!—the spearman floats
A weltering corse beside the boats,
And the stern Matron o'er him stood,
Her hand and dagger streaming blood.

XXI.

"'Revenge! revenge!' the Saxons cried,
The Gaels' exulting shout replied.
Despite the elemental rage,
Again they hurried to engage;
But, ere they closed in desperate fight,
Bloody with spurring came a knight,
Sprung from his horse, and, from a crag,
Waved 'twixt the hosts a milk-white flag.
Clarion and trumpet by his side
Rang forth a truce-note high and wide,
While, in the monarch's name, afar
A herald's voice forbade the war,
For Bothwell's lord, and Roderick bold,
Were both, he said, in captive hold."—
—But here the lay made sudden stand;
The harp escaped the minstrel's hand!—
Oft had he stolen a glance, to spy
How Roderick brooked his minstrelsy:
At first, the Chieftain, to the chime,
With lifted hand, kept feeble time;
That motion ceased,—yet feeling strong
Varied his look as changed the song;
At length, no more his deafened ear
The minstrel melody can hear:
His face grows sharp,—his hands are clenched
As if some pang his heart-strings wrenched;
Set are his teeth,—his fading eye
Is sternly fixed on vacancy.
Thus, motionless, and moanless, drew
His parting breath, stout Roderick Dhu!—
Old Allan-bane looked on aghast,
While grim and still his spirit passed:

But when he saw that life was fled,
He poured his wailing o'er the dead.

XXII.

LAMENT.

"And art thou cold, and lowly laid,
Thy foeman's dread, thy people's aid.
Breadalbane's boast, Clan-Alpine's shade!
For thee shall none a requiem say?—
For thee, who loved the minstrel's lay,
For thee, of Bothwell's house the stay,
The shelter of her exiled line—
E'en in this prison-house of thine,
I'll wail for Alpine's honoured pine!

"What groans shall yonder valleys fill!
What shrieks of grief shall rend yon hill!
What tears of burning rage shall thrill,
When mourns thy tribe thy battles done,
Thy fall before the race was won,
Thy sword ungirt ere set of sun!
There breathes not clansman of thy line,
But would have given his life for thine.—
O woe for Alpine's honoured pine!

"Sad was thy lot on mortal stage!—
The captive thrush may brook the cage,
The prisoned eagle dies for rage.
Brave spirit, do not scorn my strain,
And, when its notes awake again,
Even she, so long beloved in vain,
Shall with my harp her voice combine,
And mix her woe and tears with mine,
To wail Clan-Alpine's honoured pine."—

XXIII.

Ellen, the while, with bursting heart,
Remained in lordly bower apart,
Where played, with many-coloured gleams
Through storied pane the rising beams.
In vain on gilded roof they fall,
And lightened up a tapestried wall,
And for her use a menial train
A rich collation spread in vain.
The banquet proud, the chamber gay,
Scarce drew one curious glance astray;
Or, if she looked, 'twas but to say,
With better omen dawned the day
In that lone isle, where waved on high
The dun deer's hide for canopy;
Where oft her noble father shared
The simple meal her care prepared,

While Lufra, crouching by her side,
Her station claimed with jealous pride,
And Douglas, bent on woodland game,
Spoke of the chase to Malcolm Græme,
Whose answer, oft at random made,
The wandering of his thoughts betrayed.—
Those who such simple joys have known
Are taught to prize them when they're gone.
But sudden, see, she lifts her head!
The window seeks with cautious tread.
What distant music has the power
To win her in this woeful hour!
'Twas from a turret that o'erhung
Her latticed bower, the strain was sung.

XXIV.

LAY OF THE IMPRISONED HUNTSMAN.

"My hawk is tired of perch and hood,
My idle greyhound loathes his food,
My horse is weary of his stall,
And I am sick of captive thrall.
I wish I were as I have been,
Hunting the hart in forest green,
With bended bow and bloodhound free,
For that's the life is meet for me.

"I hate to learn the ebb of time
From yon dull steeple's drowsy chime,
Or mark it as the sunbeams crawl,
Inch after inch, along the wall.
The lark was wont my matins ring,
The sable rook my vespers sing;
These towers, although a king's they be,
Have not a hall of joy for me.

"No more at dawning morn I rise,
And sun myself in Ellen's eyes,
Drive the fleet deer the forest through,
And homeward wend with evening dew;
A blithesome welcome blithely meet,
And lay my trophies at her feet,
While fled the eve on wing of glee,—
That life is lost to love and me!"

XXV.

The heart-sick lay was hardly said,
The listener had not turned her head,
It trickled still, the starting tear,
When light a footstep struck her ear,
And Snowdoun's graceful Knight was near.
She turned the hastier, lest again
The prisoner should renew his strain.

"O welcome, brave Fitz-James!" she said;
"How may an almost orphan maid
Pay the deep debt,"—"O say not so!
To me no gratitude you owe.
Not mine, alas! the boon to give,
And bid thy noble father live;
I can but be thy guide, sweet maid,
With Scotland's King thy suit to aid.
No tyrant he, though ire and pride
May lead his better mood aside.
Come, Ellen, come!—'tis more than time,
He holds his court at morning prime."—
With beating heart, and bosom wrung,
As to a brother's arm she clung.
Gently he dried the falling tear,
And gently whispered hope and cheer;
Her faltering steps half led, half stayed,
Through gallery fair and high arcade,
Till, at his touch, its wings of pride
A portal arch unfolded wide.

XXVI.

Within 'twas brilliant all and light,
A thronging scene of figures bright;
It glowed on Ellen's dazzled sight,
As when the setting sun has given
Ten thousand hues to summer even,
And, from their tissue, fancy frames
Aërial knights and fairy dames.
Still by Fitz-James her footing stayed;
A few faint steps she forward made,
Then slow her drooping head she raised,
And fearful round the presence gazed;
For him she sought, who owned this state,
The dreaded prince whose will was fate!—
She gazed on many a princely port,
Might well have ruled a royal court;
On many a splendid garb she gazed,—
Then turned bewildered and amazed,
For all stood bare; and, in the room,
Fitz-James alone wore cap and plume.
To him each lady's look was lent,
On him each courtier's eye was bent;
'Midst furs, and silks, and jewels sheen,
He stood, in simple Lincoln green,
The centre of the glittering ring,—
And Snowdoun's Knight is Scotland's King!*

* This discovery will probably remind the reader of the beautiful Arabian tale of *Il Bondocani*. Yet the incident is not borrowed from that elegant story, but from Scottish tradition. James V., of whom we are treating, was a monarch whose good and benevolent intentions often rendered his romantic freaks venial, if not respectable,

XXVII.

As wreath of snow on mountain breast,
Slides from the rock that gave it rest,
Poor Ellen glided from her stay,
And at the Monarch's feet she lay;
No word her choking voice commands,—
She showed the ring,—she clasped her hands.
O! not a moment could he brook,
The generous prince, that suppliant look!
Gently he raised her—and the while
Checked with a glance the circle's smile.
Graceful, but grave, her brow he kissed,
And bade her terrors be dismissed;—
"Yes, Fair; the wandering poor Fitz-James
The fealty of Scotland claims.
To him thy woes, thy wishes, bring;
He will redeem his signet ring.
Ask nought for Douglas,—yester even,
His prince and he have much forgiven:
Wrong hath he had from slanderous tongue,
I, from his rebel kinsmen, wrong.
We would not to the vulgar crowd
Yield what they craved with clamour loud;
Calmly we heard and judged his cause,
Our council aided and our laws.
I stanched thy father's death-feud stern,
With stout De Vaux and grey Glencairn;
And Bothwell's Lord henceforth we own
The friend and bulwark of our Throne.—
But, lovely infidel, how now?
What clouds thy misbelieving brow?
Lord James of Douglas, lend thine aid;
Thou must confirm this doubting maid."—

XXVIII.

Then forth the noble Douglas sprung,
And on his neck his daughter hung.
The Monarch drank, that happy hour,
The sweetest, holiest draught of Power,—
When it can say, with godlike voice,
Arise, sad Virtue, and rejoice!
Yet would not James the general eye
On nature's raptures long should pry;

since, from his anxious attention to the interests of the lower and most oppressed class of his subjects, he was, as we have seen, popularly termed the *King of the Commons*. For the purpose of seeing that justice was regularly administered, and frequently from the less justifiable motive of gallantry, he used to traverse the vicinage of his several palaces in various disguises. The two excellent comic songs, entitled, "The Gaberlunzie Man," and "We'll gang nae mair a Roving," are said to have been founded upon the success of his amorous adventures when travelling in the disguise of a beggar.

He stepped between—"Nay, Douglas, nay,
Steal not my proselyte away!
The riddle 'tis my right to read,
That brought this happy chance to speed.—
Yes, Ellen, when disguised I stray,
In life's more low but happier way,
'Tis under name which veils my power,
Nor falsely veils—for Stirling's tower
Of yore the name of Snowdoun claims,*
And Normans call me James Fitz-James.
Thus watch I o'er insulted laws,
Thus learn to right the injured cause."—
Then, in a tone apart and low,
—"Ah! little traitress! none must know
What idle dream, what lighter thought,
What vanity full dearly bought,
Joined to thine eye's dark witchcraft, drew
My spell-bound steps to Ben-venue,
In dangerous hour, and all but gave
Thy monarch's life to mountain glaive!"—
Aloud he spoke:—"Thou still dost hold
That little talisman of gold,
Pledge of my faith, Fitz-James's ring—
What seeks fair Ellen of the King?"

XXIX.

Full well the conscious maiden guessed,
He probed the weakness of her breast;
But, with that consciousness, there came
A lightening of her fears for Græme,
And more she deemed the Monarch's ire
Kindled 'gainst him, who, for her sire,
Rebellious broad-sword boldly drew;
And to her generous feeling true,
She craved the grace of Roderick Dhu.—
"Forbear thy suit:—the King of Kings
Alone can stay life's parting wings,
I know his heart, I know his hand,
Have shared his cheer, and proved his brand;—
My fairest earldom would I give
To bid Clan-Alpine's Chieftain live!—
Hast thou no other boon to crave?
No other captive friend to save?"—
Blushing, she turned her from the King,
And to the Douglas gave the ring,
As if she wished her sire to speak
The suit that stained her glowing cheek.—
"Nay, then, my pledge has lost its force,
And stubborn justice holds her course.

* William of Worcester, who wrote about the middle of the fifteenth century, calls Stirling Castle, Snowdoun.

Malcolm, come forth!"—And, at the word,
Down kneeled the Græme to Scotland's Lord.
"For thee, rash youth, no suppliant sues,
From thee may Vengeance claim her dues,
Who, nurtured underneath our smile,
Hast paid our care by treacherous wile,
And sought amid thy faithful clan,
A refuge for an outlawed man,
Dishonouring thus thy loyal name.—
Fetters and warder for the Græme!"—
His chain of gold the King unstrung,
The links o'er Malcolm's neck he flung,
Then gently drew the glittering band,
And laid the clasp on Ellen's hand.

Harp of the North, farewell! The hills grow dark,
On purple peaks a deeper shade descending;
In twilight copse the glow-worm lights her spark,
The deer, half-seen, are to the covert wending.
Resume thy wizard elm! the fountain lending,
And the wild breeze, thy wilder minstrelsy;
Thy numbers sweet with Nature's vespers blending,
With distant echo from the fold and lea,
And herd-boy's evening pipe, and hum of housing bee.

Yet, once again, farewell, thou Minstrel Harp!
Yet, once again, forgive my feeble sway,
And little reck I of the censure sharp
May idly cavil at an idle lay.
Much have I owed thy strains on life's long way,
Through secret woes the world has never known,
When on the weary night dawned wearier day,
And bitterer was the grief devoured alone.
That I o'erlive such woes, Enchantress! is thine own.

Hark! as my lingering footsteps slow retire,
Some Spirit of the Air has waked thy string!
'Tis now a Seraph bold, with touch of fire,
'Tis now the brush of Fairy's frolic wing.
Receding now, the dying numbers ring
Fainter and fainter down the rugged dell,
And now the mountain breezes scarcely bring
A wandering witch-note of the distant spell—
And now, 'tis silent all!—Enchantress, fare thee well!

THE

VISION OF DON RODERICK.

A Poem.

BY

WALTER SCOTT.

"Quid dignum memorare tuis, Hispania, terris,
Vox humana valet!"——CLAUDIAN.

TO

JOHN WHITMORE, ESQ.,

AND

TO THE COMMITTEE OF SUBSCRIBERS FOR RELIEF OF THE PORTUGUESE SUFFERERS,

IN WHICH HE PRESIDES,

This Poem,

COMPOSED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE FUND UNDER THEIR MANAGEMENT, IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

WALTER SCOTT.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION, 1811.

THE following Poem is founded upon a Spanish Tradition, particularly detailed in the Notes; but bearing, in general, that Don Roderick, the last Gothic King of Spain, when the Invasion of the Moors was impending, had the temerity to descend into an ancient vault near Toledo, the opening of which had been denounced as fatal to the Spanish monarchy. The legend adds, that his rash curiosity was mortified by an emblematical representation of those Saracens who, in the year 714, defeated him in battle, and reduced Spain under their dominion. I have presumed to prolong the Vision of the Revolutions of Spain down to the present eventful crisis of the Peninsula; and to divide it, by a supposed change of scene, into THREE PERIODS. The FIRST of these represents the Invasion of the Moors, the Defeat and Death of Roderick, and closes with the peaceful occupation of the country by the Victors. The SECOND PERIOD embraces the state of the Peninsula, when the conquests of the Spaniards and Portuguese in the East and West Indies had raised to the highest pitch the renown of their arms; sullied, however, by superstition and cruelty. An allusion to the inhumanities of the Inquisition terminates this picture. The LAST PART of the Poem opens with the state of Spain previous to the unparalleled treachery of BUONAPARTE; gives a sketch of the usurpation attempted upon that unsuspicious and friendly kingdom, and terminates with the arrival of the British succours. It may be farther proper to mention, that the object of the Poem is less to commemorate or detail particular incidents, than to exhibit a general and impressive picture of the several periods brought upon the stage.

I am too sensible of the respect due to the Public, especially by one who has already experienced more than ordinary indulgence, to offer any apology for the inferiority of the poetry to the subject it is chiefly designed to commemorate. Yet I think it proper to mention, that, while I was hastily executing a work, written for a temporary purpose, and on passing events, the task was most cruelly interrupted by the successive deaths of Lord President BLAIR,* and Lord Viscount MELVILLE.† In those distinguished characters, I had not only to regret persons whose lives were most important to Scotland, but also whose notice and patronage honoured my entrance upon active life; and I may add, with melancholy pride, who permitted my more advanced age to claim no common share in their friendship. Under such interruptions, the following verses, which my best and happiest efforts must have left far unworthy of their theme, have, I am myself sensible, an appearance of negligence and incoherence, which, in other circumstances, I might have been able to remove.

EDINBURGH, *June 24th*, 1811.

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* Robert Blair, Lord President of the Court of Session. He was the son of the Rev. R. Blair, author of "The Grave." He died at Edinburgh, May 28, 1811.—*Ann. Reg.* 1811.

† Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville. He died at Edinburgh, May 27, 1811.—*Ann. Reg.* 1811.—In the Edinburgh *Annual Register* for 1811, Blair is stated to have died May 20, and Lord Melville May 29; and this appears to be the correct account.

THE VISION OF DON RODERICK.

INTRODUCTION.

I.

Lives there a strain, whose sounds of mounting fire
May rise distinguished o'er the din of war,
Or died it with yon Master of the Lyre,
Who sung beleaguered Ilion's evil star?
Such, Wellington, might reach thee from afar
Wafting its descant wide o'er Ocean's range;
Nor shouts, nor clashing arms, its mood could mar
All as it swelled 'twixt each loud trumpet change,
That clangs to Britain, victory, to Portugal, revenge!

II.

Yes! such a strain, with all-o'erpowering measure,
Might melodize with each tumultuous sound,
Each voice of fear or triumph, woe or pleasure,
That rings Mondego's ravaged shores around;
The thundering cry of hosts with conquest crowned,
The female shriek, the ruined peasant's moan,
The shout of captives from their chains unbound,
The foiled oppressor's deep and sullen groan,
A Nation's choral hymn for tyranny o'erthrown.

III.

But we, weak minstrels of a laggard day,
Skilled but to imitate an elder page,
Timid and raptureless, can we repay
The debt thou claim'st in this exhausted age?
Thou givest our lyres a theme, that might engage
Those that could send thy name o'er sea and land,
While sea and land shall last; for Homer's rage
A theme; a theme for Milton's mighty hand—
How much unmeet for us, a faint degenerate band!

IV.

Ye mountain's stern! within whose rugged breast
The friends of Scottish freedom found repose;
Ye torrents! whose hoarse sounds have soothed their rest,
Returning from the field of vanquished foes;
Say, have ye lost each wild majestic close,
That erst* the choir of bards or Druids flung,
What time their hymn of victory arose,
And Cattraeth's glens† with voice of triumph rung,
And mystic Merlin harped, and grey-haired Llywarch sung?

V.

O! if your wilds such minstrelsy retain,
As sure your changeful gales seem oft to say,
When sweeping wild and sinking soft again,
Like trumpet-jubilee or harp's wild sway;
If ye can echo such triumphant lay,
Then lend the note to him has loved you long!
Who pious gathered each tradition grey
That floats your solitary wastes along,
And with affection vain gave them new voice in song.

VI.

For not till now, how oft soe'er the task
Of truant verse hath lightened graver care,
From muse or sylvan was he wont to ask,
In phrase poetic, inspiration fair;
Careless he gave his numbers to the air,—
They came unsought for, if applauses came;
Nor for himself prefers he now the prayer;
Let but his verse befit a hero's fame,
Immortal be the verse!—forgot the poet's name.

* Formerly.

† This locality may startle those readers who do not recollect, that much of the ancient poetry preserved in Wales refers less to the history of the principality to which that name is now limited, than to events which happened in the north-west of England and south-west of Scotland, where the Britons for a long time made a stand against the Saxons. The battle of Cattraeth, lamented by the celebrated Aneurin, is supposed by the learned Dr. Leyden to have been fought on the skirts of Ettricke Forest. It is known to the English reader by the paraphrase of Gray, beginning,—

"Had I but the torrent's might,
With headlong rage and wild affright," &c.

But it is not generally known that the champions, mourned in this beautiful dirge, were the British inhabitants of Edinburgh, who were cut off by the Saxons of Deiria, or Northumberland, about the latter part of the sixth century.—(Turner's "History of the Anglo-Saxons," edition 1799, vol. i. p. 222.) Llywarch, the celebrated bard and monarch, was prince of Argood, in Cumberland; and his youthful exploits were performed upon the Border, although in his age he was driven into Powys by the successes of the Anglo-Saxons. As for Merlin Wyllt, or the savage, his name of Caledonian, and his retreat into the Caledonian Wood, appropriate him to Scotland.

VII.

Hark, from yon misty cairn their answer tossed:
"Minstrel! the fame of whose romantic lyre,
Capricious swelling now, may soon be lost,
Like the light flickering of a cottage fire;
If to such task presumptuous thou aspire,
Seek not from us the meed to warrior due:
Age after age has gathered son to sire,
Since our grey cliffs the din of conflict knew,
Or, pealing through our vales, victorious bugles blew.

VIII.

"Decayed our old traditionary lore,
Save where the lingering fays renew their ring,
By milkmaid seen beneath the hawthorn hoar,
Or round the marge of Minchmore's* haunted spring
Save where their legends grey-haired shepherds sing,
That now scarce win a listening ear but thine,
Of feuds obscure, and Border ravaging,
And rugged deeds recount in rugged line,
Of moonlight foray made on Teviot, Tweed, or Tyne.

IX.

"No! search romantic lands, where the near sun
Gives with unstinted boon ethereal flame,
Where the rude villager, his labour done,
In verse spontaneous† chants some favoured name;
Whether Olalia's charms his tribute claim,
Her eye of diamond, and her locks of jet;
Or whether, kindling at the deeds of Græme,‡
He sing, to wild Morisco measure set,
Old Albin's red claymore, green Erin's bayonet.

X.

"Explore those regions, where the flinty crest
Of wild Nevada ever gleams with snows,
Where in the proud Alhambra's ruined breast
Barbaric monuments of pomp repose;

* A belief in the existence and nocturnal revels of the fairies still lingers among the vulgar in Selkirkshire. A copious fountain upon the ridge of Minchmore, called the Cheesewell, is supposed to be sacred to these fanciful spirits, and it was customary to propitiate them by throwing in something upon passing it. A pin was the usual oblation, and the ceremony is still sometimes practised, though rather in jest than earnest.

† The flexibility of the Italian and Spanish languages, and perhaps the liveliness of their genius, renders these countries distinguished for the talent of improvisation, which is found even among the lowest of the people. It is mentioned by Baretti and other travellers.

‡ Over a name sacred for ages to heroic verse, a poet may be allowed to exercise some power. I have used the freedom, here and elsewhere, to alter the orthography of the name of my gallant countryman, in order to apprize the Southern reader of its legitimate sound; Grahame being, on the other side of the Tweed, usually pronounced as a dissyllable.

Or where the banners of more ruthless foes
Than the fierce Moor, float o'er Toledo's fane,
From whose tall towers even now the patriot throws
An anxious glance, to spy upon the plain
The blended ranks of England, Portugal, and Spain.

XI.

"There, of Numantian fire a swarthy spark
Still lightens in the sun-burnt native's eye;
The stately port, slow step, and visage dark,
Still mark enduring pride and constancy.
And, if the glow of feudal chivalry
Beam not, as once, thy nobles' dearest pride,
Iberia! oft thy crestless peasantry
Have seen the plumed Hidalgo quit their side;
Have seen, yet dauntless stood—'gainst fortune fought and died.

XII.

"And cherished still by that unchanging race,
Are themes for minstrelsy more high than thine;
Of strange tradition many a mystic trace,
Legend and vision, prophecy and sign;
Where wonders wild of Arabesque combine
With Gothic imagery of darker shade,
Forming a model meet for minstrel line.
Go, seek such theme!"—the Mountain Spirit said:
With filial awe I heard—I heard, and I obeyed.

THE VISION.

I.

Rearing their crests amid the cloudless skies,
And darkly clustering in the pale moonlight,
Toledo's holy towers and spires arise,
As from a trembling lake of silver white;
Their mingled shadows intercept the sight
Of the broad burial-ground outstretched below,
And nought disturbs the silence of the night;
All sleeps in sullen shade or silver glow,
All save the heavy swell of Teio's ceaseless flow.

II.

All save the rushing swell of Teio's tide,
Or, distant heard, a courser's neigh or tramp
Their changing rounds as watchful horsemen ride,
To guard the limits of King Roderick's camp.

For, through the river's night-fog rolling damp,
Was many a proud pavilion dimly seen,
Which glimmered back, against the moon's fair lamp,
Tissues of silk and silver twisted sheen,
And standards proudly pitched, and warders armed between.

III.

But of their Monarch's person keeping ward,
Since last the deep-mouthed bell of vespers tolled,
The chosen soldiers of the royal guard
Their post beneath the proud Cathedral hold:
A band unlike their Gothic sires of old,
Who, for the cap of steel and iron mace,
Bear slender darts, and casques bedecked with gold,
While silver-studded belts their shoulders grace,
Where ivory quivers ring in the broad falchion's place.

IV.

In the light language of an idle court,
They murmured at their master's long delay,
And held his lengthened orisons in sport:—
"What! will Don Roderick here till morning stay,
To wear in shrift and prayer the night away?
And are his hours in such dull penance passed
For fair Florinda's* plundered charms to pay?"—
Then to the east their weary eyes they cast,
And wished the lingering dawn would glimmer forth at last.

V.

But, far within, Toledo's Prelate lent
An ear of fearful wonder to the King;
The silver lamp a fitful lustre sent,
So long that sad confession witnessing:
For Roderick told of many a hidden thing,
Such as are lothly† uttered to the air,

*Almost all the Spanish historians, as well as the voice of tradition, ascribe the invasion of the Moors to the forcible violation committed by Roderick upon Florinda, called by the Moors, Caba, or Cava. She was the daughter of Count Julian, one of the Gothic monarch's principal lieutenants, who, when the crime was perpetrated, was engaged in the defence of Ceuta against the Moors. In his indignation at the ingratitude of his sovereign, and the dishonour of his daughter, Count Julian forgot the duties of a Christian and a patriot, and forming an alliance with Musa, then the caliph's lieutenant in Africa, he countenanced the invasion of Spain by a body of Saracens and Africans, commanded by the celebrated Tarik; the issue of which was the defeat and death of Roderick, and the occupation of almost the whole peninsula by the Moors. Voltaire, in his General History, expresses his doubts of the popular story, and Gibbon gives him some countenance. But the universal tradition is quite sufficient for the purposes of poetry. The Spaniards, in detestation of Florinda's memory, are said, by Cervantes, never to bestow that name upon any human female, reserving it for their dogs.

† Unwillingly.

When Fear, Remorse, and Shame, the bosom wring,
And Guilt his secret burthen cannot bear,
And conscience seeks in speech a respite from Despair.

VI.

Full on the Prelate's face, and silver hair,
The stream of failing light was feebly rolled;
But Roderick's visage, though his head was bare,
Was shadowed by his hand and mantle's fold.
While of his hidden soul the sins he told,
Proud Alaric's descendant could not brook,
That mortal man his bearing should behold,
Or boast that he had seen, when conscience shook,
Fear tame a monarch's brow, remorse a warrior's look.

VII.

The old man's faded cheek waxed yet more pale,
As many a secret sad the king bewrayed;
And sign and glance eked out the unfinished tale,
When in the midst his faltering whisper stayed.—
"Thus royal Witiza* was slain,"—he said;
"Yet, holy father, deem not it was I."—
Thus still Ambition strives her crimes to shade—
"O rather deem 'twas stern necessity!
Self-preservation bade, and I must kill or die.

VIII.

"And, if Florinda's shrieks alarmed the air,
If she invoked her absent sire in vain,
And on her knees implored that I would spare,
Yet, reverend priest, thy sentence rash refrain!—
All is not as it seems—the female train
Know by their bearing to disguise their mood:"—
But Conscience here, as if in high disdain,
Sent to the Monarch's cheek the burning blood—
He stayed his speech abrupt—and up the Prelate stood.

IX.

"O hardened offspring of an iron race!
What of thy crimes, Don Roderick, shall I say?
What alms, or prayers, or penance can efface
Murder's dark spot, wash treason's stain away!
For the foul ravisher how shall I pray,
Who, scarce repentant, makes his crime his boast?
How hope Almighty vengeance shall delay,
Unless, in mercy to yon Christian host,
He spare the shepherd, lest the guiltless sheep be lost."—

* The predecessor of Roderick upon the Spanish throne, and slain by his connivance, as is affirmed by Rodriguez of Toledo, the father of Spanish history.

X.

Then kindled the dark Tyrant in his mood,
And to his brow returned its dauntless gloom;
"And welcome then," he cried, "be blood for blood,
For treason treachery, for dishonour doom!
Yet will I know whence come they, or by whom.
Show, for thou canst—give forth the fated key,
And guide me, Priest, to that mysterious room,
Where, if aught true in old tradition be,
His nation's future fates a Spanish King shall see."*—

XI.

"Ill-fated Prince! recall the desperate word,
Or pause ere yet the omen thou obey!
Bethink, yon spell-bound portal would afford
Never to former Monarch entrance-way;
Nor shall it ever ope, old records say,
Save to a King, the last of all his line,
What time his empire totters to decay,
And treason digs, beneath, her fatal mine,
And, high above, impends avenging wrath divine."—

XII.

—"Prelate! a Monarch's fate brooks no delay!
Lead on!"—The ponderous key the old man took,
And held the winking lamp, and led the way
By winding stair, dark aisle, and secret nook,
Then on an ancient gateway bent his look;
And, as the key the desperate King essayed,
Low muttered thunders the Cathedral shook,
And twice he stopped, and twice new effort made,
Till the huge bolts rolled back, and the loud hinges brayed.

XIII.

Long, large, and lofty, was that vaulted hall;
Roof, walls, and floor, were all of marble stone,
Of polished marble, black as funeral pall,
Carved o'er with signs and characters unknown.

* The transition of an incident from history to tradition, and from tradition to fable and romance, becoming more marvellous at each step from its original simplicity, is not ill exemplified in the account of the "Fated Chamber" of Don Roderick, as given by his namesake, the historian of Toledo, contrasted with subsequent and more romantic accounts of the same subterranean discovery.

About the term of the expulsion of the Moors from Granada, we find, in the "Historia Verdadeyra del Rey Don Rodrigo," a (pretended) translation from the Arabic of the sage Alcayde Abulcacim Tarif Abentarique, a legend which puts to shame the modesty of the historian Roderick, with his chest and prophetic picture. The custom of ascribing a pretended Moorish original to these legendary histories, is ridiculed by Cervantes, who affects to translate the History of the Knight of the Woeful figure, from the Arabic of the sage Cid Hamet Benengeli.

A paly light, as of the dawning, shone
Through the sad bounds, but whence they could not spy;
For window to the upper air was none;
Yet, by that light, Don Roderick could descry
Wonders that ne'er till then were seen by mortal eye.

XIV.

Grim sentinels, against the upper wall,
Of molten bronze, two Statues held their place:
Massive their naked limbs, their stature tall,
Their frowning foreheads golden circles grace.
Moulded they seemed for kings of giant race,
That lived and sinned before the avenging flood;
This grasped a scythe, that rested on a mace;
This spread his wings for flight, that pondering stood,
Each stubborn seemed and stern, immutable of mood.

XV.

Fixed was the right-hand Giant's brazen look
Upon his brother's glass of shifting sand,
As if its ebb he measured by a book,
Whose iron volume loaded his huge hand;
In which was wrote of many a falling land,
Of empires lost, and kings to exile driven;
And o'er that pair their names in scroll expand—
"Lo, DESTINY and TIME! to whom by Heaven
The guidance of the earth is for a season given."—

XVI.

Even while they read, the sand-glass wastes away;
And, as the last and lagging grains did creep,
That right-hand Giant 'gan his club upsway
As one that startles from a heavy sleep.
Full on the upper wall the mace's sweep
At once descended with the force of thunder,
And hurtling down at once, in crumbled heap,
The marble boundary was rent asunder,
And gave to Roderick's view new sights of fear and wonder.

XVII.

For they might spy, beyond that mighty breach,
Realms as of Spain in visioned prospect laid,
Castles and towers, in due proportion each,
As by some skilful artist's hand portrayed:
Here, crossed by many a wild Sierra's shade,
And boundless plains that tire the traveller's eye;
There, rich with vineyard and with olive-glade,
Or deep-embrowned by forests huge and high,
Or washed by mighty streams, that slowly murmured by.

XVIII.

And here, as erst upon the antique stage
Passed forth the bands of masquers trimly led,

In various forms and various equipage,
While fitting strains the hearer's fancy fed;
So, to sad Roderick's eye in order spread,
Successive pageants filled that mystic scene,
Showing the fate of battles ere they bled,
And issue of events that had not been;
And ever and anon strange sounds were heard between.

XIX.

First shrilled an unrepeated female shriek!—
It seemed as if Don Roderick knew the call,
For the bold blood was blanching in his cheek.—
Then answered kettle-drum and atabal,*
Gong-peal and cymbal-clank the ear appal,
The Tecbir war-cry, and the Lelie's yell,†
Ring wildly dissonant along the hall.
Needs not to Roderick their dread import tell—
"The Moor!" he cried, "the Moor!—ring out the Tocsin bell!

XX.

"They come! they come! I see the groaning lands
White with the turbans of each Arab horde,
Swart Zaarah joins her misbelieving bands,
Alla and Mahomet their battle-word,
The choice they yield the Koran or the sword.—
See how the Christians rush to arms amain!—
In yonder shout the voice of conflict roared;
The shadowy hosts are closing on the plain—
Now, God and St. Iago strike, for the good cause of Spain!

XXI.

"By heaven, the Moors prevail! the Christians yield!—
Their coward leader gives for flight the sign!
The sceptred craven mounts to quit the field—
Is not yon steed Orelia?—Yes, 'tis mine!‡

* A kind of tabor used by the Moors.—*Wright, Prov. Dict.*

†The tecbir (derived from the words *Alla acbar*, God is most mighty) was the original war-cry of the Saracens. It is celebrated by Hughes in the Siege of Damascus:

"We heard the tecbir; so these Arabs call
Their shout of onset, when with loud appeal
They challenge Heaven, as if demanding conquest."

The *Lelie*, well known to the Christians during the crusades, is the shout of *Alla illa Alla*, the Manomedan confession of faith. It is twice used in poetry by my friend Mr. W. Stuart Rose, in the romance of "Partenopex," and in the "Crusade of St. Lewis."

‡Count Julian, the father of the injured Florinda, with the connivance and assistance of Oppas, archbishop of Toledo, invited, in 713, the Saracens into Spain. A considerable army arrived under the command of Tarik, or Tarif, who bequeathed the well-known name of Gibraltar (*Gibel al Tarik* or the mountain of Tarik) to the place of his landing. He was joined by Count Julian, ravaged Andalusia, and took Seville. In 714 they returned with a still greater

But never was she turned from battle line;
Lo! where the recreant spurs o'er stock and stone!—
Curses pursue the slave and wrath divine!
Rivers ingulf him!"—"Hush," in shuddering tone,
The Prelate said; "rash Prince, yon visioned form's thine own."—

XXII.

Just then, a torrent crossed the flier's course;
The dangerous ford the Kingly Likeness tried;
But the deep eddies whelmed both man and horse
Swept like benighted peasant down the tide;
And the proud Moslemah spread far and wide,
As numerous as their native locust band;
Berber and Ismael's sons the spoils divide,
With naked scimitars mete out the land,
And for their bondsmen base the freeborn natives brand.

XXIII.

Then rose the grated Harem, to enclose
The loveliest maidens of the Christian line;
Then, menials to their misbelieving foes,
Castile's young nobles held forbidden wine;
Then, too, the holy Cross, salvation's sign,
By impious hands was from the altar thrown,
And the deep aisles of the polluted shrine
Echoed, for holy hymn and organ tone,
The Santon's* frantic dance, the Fakir's* gibbering moan.

XXIV.

How fares Don Roderick?—E'en as one who spies
Flames dart their glare o'er midnight's sable woof,
And hears around his children's piercing cries,
And sees the pale assistants stand aloof;
While cruel Conscience brings him bitter proof,
His folly, or his crime, have caused his grief;
And, while above him nods the crumbling roof,
He curses earth and Heaven—himself in chief—
Desperate of earthly aid, despairing Heaven's relief!

XXV.

That scythe-armed Giant turned his fatal glass,
And twilight on the landscape closed her wings;
Far to Asturian hills the war-sounds pass,
And in their stead rebeck† or timbrel rings;

force, and Roderick marched into Andalusia at the head of a great army to give them battle. (See "Mariana's History of Spain," book vi. chap. 9.) Orelia, the courser of Don Roderick, mentioned in the text, was celebrated for her speed and form. She is mentioned repeatedly in Spanish romance, and also by Cervantes.

*These are two kinds of dervises or Mahometan monks.

†A kind of violin.—*Halliwell.*

And to the sound the bell-decked dancer springs,
Bazaars resound as when their marts are met,
In tourney light the Moor his jerrid* flings,
And on the land as evening seemed to set,
The Imaum's chant was heard from mosque or minaret.

XXVI.

So passed that pageant. Ere another came,
The visionary scene was wrapped in smoke,
Whose sulph'rous wreaths were crossed by sheets of flame;
With every flash a bolt explosive broke,
Till Roderick deemed the fiends had burst their yoke,
And waved 'gainst heaven the infernal gonfalone!†
For War a new and dreadful language spoke,
Never by ancient warrior heard or known;
Lightning and smoke her breath, and thunder was her tone.

XXVII.

From the dim landscape roll the clouds away—
The Christians have regained their heritage:
Before the Cross has waned the Crescent's ray,
And many a monastery decks the stage,
And lofty church, and low-browed hermitage.
The land obeys a Hermit and a Knight,—
The Genii these of Spain for many an age;
This clad in sackcloth, that in armour bright,
And that was VALOUR named, this BIGOTRY was hight.

XXVIII.

VALOUR was harnessed like a Chief of old,
Armed at all points, and prompt for knightly gest:‡
His sword was tempered in the Ebro cold,
Morena's eagle-plume adorned his crest,
The spoils of Afric's lion bound his breast.
Fierce he stepped forward and flung down his gage,
As if of mortal kind to brave the best.
Him followed his Companion, dark and sage,
As he, my Master, sung the dangerous Archimage.

XXIX.

Haughty of heart and brow the Warrior came,
In look and language proud as proud might be,
Vaunting his lordship, lineage, fights and fame,
Yet was that bare-foot Monk more proud than he;
And as the ivy climbs the tallest tree,
So round the loftiest soul his toils he wound,
And with his spells subdued the fierce and free,
Till ermined Age, and Youth in arms renowned,
Honouring his scourge and hair-cloth, meekly kissed the ground.

* A kind of lance. † A banner. ‡ Deed.—*Halliwell.*

XXX.

And thus it chanced that VALOUR, peerless Knight,
Who ne'er to King or Kaisar veiled his crest,
Victorious still in bull-feast, or in fight,
Since first his limbs with mail he did invest,
Stooped ever to that Anchoret's behest;
Nor reasoned of the right nor of the wrong,
But at his bidding laid the lance in rest,
And wrought fell deeds the troubled world along,
For he was fierce as brave, and pitiless as strong.

XXXI.

Oft his proud galleys sought some new-found world,
That latest sees the sun, or first the morn;
Still at that Wizard's feet their spoils he hurled,
Ingots of ore from rich Potosi borne,
Crowns by Caciques,* aigrettes by Omrahs* worn,
Wrought of rare gems, but broken, rent, and foul;
Idols of gold from heathen temples torn,
Bedabbled all with blood.—With grisly scowl
The Hermit marked the stains, and smiled beneath his cowl.

XXXII.

Then did he bless the offering, and bade make
Tribute to heaven of gratitude and praise;
And at his word the choral hymns awake,
And many a hand the silver censer sways.
But with the incense-breath these censers raise,
Mix steams from corpses smouldering in the fire;
The groans of prisoned victims mar the lays,
And shrieks of agony confound the quire,
While, 'mid the mingled sounds, the darkened scenes expire.

XXXIII.

Preluding light, were strains of music heard,
As once again revolved that measured sand;
Such sounds as when, for sylvan dance prepared,
Gay Xeres summons forth her vintage band;
When for the light Bolero† ready stand
The Mozo blithe, with gay Muchacha met,
He conscious of his broidered cap and band,
She of her netted locks and light corsette,
Each tiptoe perched to spring, and shake the castanet.

XXXIV.

And well such strains the opening scene became;
For VALOUR had relaxed his ardent look,
And at a lady's feet, like lion tame,
Lay stretched, full loth the weight of arms to brook;

* Terms derived from the people in the Spanish colonies of America.

† The Bolero is a very light and active dance, much practised by the Spaniards, in which castanets are always used. *Mozo and Muchacha* are equivalent to our phrase of lad and lass.

And softened BIGOTRY, upon his book,
Pattered a task of little gold or ill:
But the blithe peasant plied his pruning-hook,
Whistled the muleteer o'er vale and hill,
And rung from village green the merry Seguidille.

XXXV.

Grey Royalty, grown impotent of toil,
Let the grave sceptre slip his lazy hold,
And careless saw his rule become the spoil
Of a loose Female and her Minion bold;
But peace was on the cottage and the fold,
From court intrigue, from bickering faction far:
Beneath the chesnut-tree Love's tale was told;
And to the tinkling of the light guitar,
Sweet stooped the western sun, sweet rose the evening star.

XXXVI.

As that sea-cloud, in size like human hand,
When first from Carmel by the Tishbite seen,
Came slowly overshadowing Israel's land,*
Awhile, perchance, bedecked with colours sheen,
While yet the sunbeams on its skirts had been,
Limning with purple and with gold its shroud,
Till darker folds obscured the blue serene,
And blotted Heaven with one broad sable cloud—
Then sheeted rain burst down, and whirlwinds howled aloud;—

XXXVII.

Even so upon that peaceful scene was poured,
Like gathering clouds, full many a foreign band,
And HE, their Leader, wore in sheath his sword,
And offered peaceful front and open hand;
Veiling the perjured treachery he planned,
By friendship's zeal and honour's specious guise,
Until he won the passes of the land;
Then, burst were honour's oath, and friendship's ties!
He clutched his vulture-grasp, and called fair Spain his prize.

XXXVIII.

An Iron Crown his anxious forehead bore;
And well such diadem his heart became,
Who ne'er his purpose for remorse gave o'er,
Or checked his course for piety or shame;
Who, trained a soldier, deemed a soldier's fame
Might flourish in the wreath of battles won,
Though neither truth nor honour decked his name:
Who, placed by fortune on a Monarch's throne,
Recked not of Monarch's faith, or Mercy's kingly tone.

* 1 Kings, xviii. 44.

XXXIX.

From a rude isle his ruder lineage came:
The spark, that, from a suburb hovel's hearth
Ascending, wraps some capital in flame,
Hath not a meaner or more sordid birth.
And for the soul that bade him waste the earth—
The sable land-flood from some swamp obscure,
That poisons the glad husband-field with dearth,
And by destruction bids its fame endure,
Hath not a source more sullen, stagnant, and impure.

XL.

Before that Leader strode a shadowy Form:
Her limbs like mist, her torch like meteor showed,
With which she beckoned him through fight and storm,
And all he crushed that crossed his desperate road,
Nor thought, nor feared, nor looked on what he trode;
Realms could not glut his pride, blood could not slake,
So oft as e'er she shook her torch abroad—
It was AMBITION bade his terrors wake,
Nor deigned she, as of yore, a milder form to take.

XLI.

No longer now she spurned at mean revenge,
Or stayed her hand for conquered foeman's moan,
As when, the fates of aged Rome to change,
By Cæsar's side she crossed the Rubicon;
Nor joyed she to bestow the spoils she won,
As when the banded powers of Greece were tasked,
To war beneath the Youth of Macedon:
No seemly veil her modern minion asked,
He saw her hideous face, and loved the fiend unmasked.

XLII.

That Prelate marked his march—On banners blazed
With battles won in many a distant land,
On eagle-standards and on arms he gazed;
"And hopest thou, then," he said, "thy power shall stand?
O thou hast builded on the shifting sand,
And thou hast tempered it with slaughter's flood;
And know, fell scourge in the Almighty's hand!
Gore-moistened trees shall perish in the bud,
And, by a bloody death, shall die the Man of Blood!"—

XLIII.

The ruthless Leader beckoned from his train
A wan fraternal Shade, and bade him kneel,
And paled his temples with the crown of Spain,
While trumpets rang, and heralds cried, "Castile!"*

* The heralds at the coronation of a Spanish monarch proclaim his name three times, and repeat three times the word *Castilla, Castilla,*

Not that he loved him—No!—in no man's weal,
Scarce in his own, e'er joyed that sullen heart;
Yet round that throne he bade his warriors wheel,
That the poor puppet might perform his part,
And be a sceptred slave, at his stern beck to start.

XLIV.

But on the Natives of that Land misused,
Not long the silence of amazement hung,
Nor brooked they long their friendly faith abused,
For, with a common shriek, the general tongue
Exclaimed, "To arms!" and fast to arms they sprung;
And VALOUR woke, that Genius of the land!
Pleasure, and ease, and sloth, aside he flung,
As burst the awakening Nazarite his band,
When 'gainst his treacherous foes he clenched his dreadful hand.*

XLV.

That mimic Monarch now cast anxious eye
Upon the Satraps that begirt him round,
Now doffed his royal robe in act to fly,
And from his brow the diadem unbound.
So oft, so near, the Patriot bugle wound,
From Tarik's walls to Bilboa's mountains blown,
These martial satellites hard labour found,
To guard awhile his substituted throne—
Light recking of his cause, but battling for their own.

XLVI.

From Alpuhara's peak that bugle rung,
And it was echoed from Corunna's wall;
Stately Seville responsive war-shout flung,
Granada caught it in her Moorish hall;
Galicia bade her children fight or fall,
Wild Biscay shook his mountain-coronet,
Valencia roused her at the battle-call,
And, foremost still where Valour's sons are met,
Fast started to his gun each fiery Miquelet.

XLVII.

But unappalled, and burning for the fight,
The Invaders march, of victory secure;
Skilful their force to sever or unite,
And trained alike to vanquish or endure.
Nor skilful less, cheap conquest to ensure,
Discord to breathe, and jealousy to sow,
To quell by boasting, and by bribes to lure;
While naught against them bring the unpractised foe,
Save hearts for freedom's cause, and hands for freedom's blow.

Castilla; which, with all other ceremonies, was carefully copied in the mock inauguration of Joseph Buonaparte. * Judges, xv. 16.

XLVIII.

Proudly they march—but O! they march not forth
By one hot field to crown a brief campaign,
And when their eagles, sweeping through the North,
Destroyed at every stoop an ancient reign!
Far other fate had Heaven decreed for Spain;
In vain the steel, in vain the torch was plied,
New Patriot armies started from the slain,
High blazed the war, and long, and far, and wide,*
And oft the God of Battles blessed the righteous side.

XLIX.

Nor unatoned, where Freedom's foes prevail,
Remained their savage waste. With blade and brand,
By day the Invaders ravaged hill and dale,
But, with the darkness, the Guerilla band
Came like night's tempest and avenged the land,
And claimed for blood the retribution due,
Probed the hard heart, and lopped the murderous hand;
And Dawn, when o'er the scene her beams she threw,
'Midst ruins they had made the spoilers' corpses knew.

L.

What Minstrel verse may sing, or tongue may tell,
Amid the visioned strife from sea to sea,
How oft the Patriot banners rose or fell,
Still honoured in defeat as victory!
For that sad pageant of events to be,
Showed every form of fight by field and flood;
Slaughter and Ruin, shouting forth their glee,
Beheld, while riding on the tempest-scud,
The waters choked with slain, the earth bedrenched with blood!

LI.

Then Zaragoza—blighted be the tongue
That names thy name without the honour due!
For never hath the harp of minstrel rung,
Of faith so felly† proved, so firmly true!
Mine, sap, and bomb, thy shattered ruins knew,
Each art of war's extremity had room,
Twice from thy half-sacked streets the foe withdrew,
And when at length stern Fate decreed thy doom,
They won not Zaragoza, but her children's bloody tomb.‡

* In allusion to the war for the deliverance of Spain from the French, which, at the time this poem was written, had just commenced.

† Fiercely.—*Halliwell.*

‡ The interesting account of Mr. Vaughan has made most readers acquainted with the first siege of Zaragoza. The last and fatal siege of that gallant and devoted city is detailed with great eloquence and precision in the "Edinburgh Annual Register" for 1809,—a work in which the affairs of Spain have been treated of with attention corre-

LII.

Yet raise thy head, sad City! Though in chains,
Enthralled thou canst not be! Arise and claim
Reverence from every heart where Freedom reigns,
For what thou worshippest!—thy sainted Dame,
She of the Column, honoured be her name,
By all, whate'er their creed, who honour love!
And like the sacred relics of the flame,
That gave some martyr to the blessed above,
To every loyal heart may thy sad embers prove!

LIII.

Nor thine alone such wreck. Gerona fair!
Faithful to death thy heroes should be sung,
Manning the towers while o'er their heads the air
Swart as the smoke from raging furnace hung;
Now thicker darkening where the mine was sprung,
Now briefly lightened by the cannon's flare,
Now arched with fire-sparks as the bomb was flung,
And reddening now with conflagration's glare,
While by the fatal light the foes for storm prepare.

LIV.

While all around was danger, strife, and fear,
While the earth shock, and darkened was the sky,
And wide Destruction stunned the listening ear,
Appalled the heart, and stupefied the eye,—
Afar was heard that thrice-repeated cry,
In which old Albion's heart and tongue unite,
Whene'er her soul is up and pulse beats high,
Whether it hail the wine-cup or the fight,
And bid each arm be strong, or bid each heart be light.

LV.

Don Roderick turned him as the shout grew loud—
A varied scene the changeful vision showed,
For where the ocean mingled with the cloud,
A gallant navy stemmed the billows broad.
From mast and stern St. George's symbol flowed,
Blent with the silver cross to Scotland dear;
Mottling the sea their landward barges rowed,
And flashed the sun on bayonet, brand, and spear,
And the wild beach returned the seaman's jovial cheer.

LVI.

It was a dread, yet spirit-stirring sight!
The billows foamed beneath a thousand oars,
Fast as they land the red-cross ranks unite,
Legions on legions brightening all the shores.

sponding to their deep interest, and to the peculiar sources of information open to the historian.

Then banners rise, and cannon-signal roars,
Then peals the warlike thunder of the drum,
Thrills the loud fife, the trumpet-flourish pours,
And patriot hopes awake, and doubts are dumb,
For, bold in Freedom's cause, the bands of Ocean come!

LVII.

A various host they came—whose ranks display
Each mode in which the warrior meets the fight,
The deep battalion locks its firm array,
And meditates his aim the marksman light;
Far glance the lines of sabres flashing bright,
Where mounted squadrons shake the echoing mead,
Lacks not artillery breathing flame and night,
Nor the fleet ordnance whirled by rapid steed,
That rivals lightning's flash in ruin and in speed.

LVIII.

A various host—from kindred realms they came,
Brethren in arms, but rivals in renown—
For yon fair bands shall merry England claim,
And with their deeds of valour deck her crown.
Hers their bold port, and hers their martial frown,
And hers their scorn of death in freedom's cause,
Their eyes of azure, and their locks of brown,
And the blunt speech that bursts without a pause,
And freeborn thoughts, which league the Soldier with the Laws.

LIX.

And O! loved warriors of the Minstrel's land!
Yonder your bonnets nod, your tartans wave;
The rugged form may mark the mountain band,
And harsher features, and a mien more grave;
But ne'er in battle-field throbbed heart so brave
As that which beats beneath the Scottish plaid,
And when the pibroch bids the battle rave,
And level for the charge your arms are laid,
Where lives the desperate foe, that for such onset stayed!

LX.

Hark! from yon stately ranks what laughter rings,
Mingling wild mirth with war's stern minstrelsy,
His jest while each blithe comrade round him flings,
And moves to death with military glee:
Boast, Erin, boast them! tameless, frank, and free,
In kindness warm, and fierce in danger known,
Rough Nature's children, humorous as she:
And He, yon Chieftain—strike the proudest tone
Of thy bold harp, green Isle!—the Hero is thine own.

LXI.

Now on the scene Vimeira* should be shown,
On Talavera's† fight should Roderick gaze,
And hear Corunna‡ wail her battle won,
And see Busaco's§ crest with lightning blaze:—
But shall fond fable mix with heroes' praise?
Hath Fiction's stage for Truth's long triumphs room?
And dare her wild-flowers mingle with the bays,
That claim a long eternity to bloom
Around the warrior's crest, and o'er the warrior's tomb!

LXII.

Or may I give adventurous Fancy scope,
And stretch a bold hand to the awful veil
That hides futurity from anxious hope,
Bidding beyond it scenes of glory hail,
And painting Europe rousing at the tale
Of Spain's invaders from her confines hurled,
While kindling Nations buckle on their mail,
And Fame, with clarion blast and wings unfurled,
To freedom and revenge awakes an injured World.

LXIII.

O vain, though anxious, is the glance I cast,
Since Fate has marked futurity her own:—
Yet Fate resigns to Worth the glorious past,
The deeds recorded and the laurels won.
Then, though the Vault of Destiny‖ be gone,
King, Prelate, all the phantasms of my brain,
Melted away like mist-wreaths in the sun,
Yet grant for faith, for valour, and for Spain,
One note of pride and fire, a Patriot's parting strain.

* This battle, in which Sir Arthur Wellesley defeated Junot at the head of forces superior in point of numbers to the English army, was fought August 21, 1808.

† This glorious victory was gained by Sir Arthur Wellesley, July 28, 1809.

‡ This victory, in which Sir John Moore fell, was won January 16, 1809.

§ Fought September 27, 1810.

‖ Before finally dismissing the enchanted cavern of Don Roderick, it may be noticed that the legend occurs in one of Calderon's plays, entitled "*La Virgen del Sagrario.*" The scene opens with the noise of the chase, and Recisundo, a predecessor of Roderick upon the Gothic throne, enters pursuing a stag. The animal assumes the form of a man, and defies the king to enter the cave, which forms the bottom of the scene, and engage with him in single combat. The king accepts the challenge, and they engage accordingly, but without advantage on either side, which induces the Genie to inform Recisundo that he is not the monarch for whom the adventure of the enchanted cavern is reserved, and he proceeds to predict the downfall of the Gothic monarchy, and of the Christian religion, which shall attend the discovery of its mysteries. Recisundo, appalled by these prophecies, orders the cavern to be secured by a gate and bolts of iron. In the second part of the same play we are informed that

CONCLUSION.

I.

"Who shall command Estrella's mountain-tide
Back to the source, when tempest-chafed, to hie?
Who, when Gascogne's vexed gulf is raging wide,
Shall hush it as a nurse her infant's cry?
His magic power let such vain boaster try,
And when the torrent shall his voice obey,
And Biscay's whirlwinds list his lullaby,
Let him stand forth and bar mine eagles' way,
And they shall heed his voice, and at his bidding stay.

II.

"Else, ne'er to stoop, till high on Lisbon's towers,
They close their wings the symbol of our yoke,
And their own sea hath whelmed yon red-cross Powers!"—
Thus, on the summit of Alverca's rock,
To Marshal, Duke, and Peer, Gaul's Leader spoke.
While downward on the land his legions press,
Before them it was rich with vine and flock,
And smiled like Eden in her summer dress;—
Behind their wasteful march, a reeking wilderness.*

III.

And shall the boastful Chief maintain his word,
Though Heaven hath heard the wailings of the land,
Though Lusitania whet her vengeful sword,
Though Britons arm, and WELLINGTON command!
No! grim Busaco's iron ridge shall stand
An adamantine barrier to his force!
And from its base shall wheel his shattered band,
As from the unshaken rock the torrent hoarse
Bears off its broken waves, and seeks a devious course.

IV.

Yet not because Alcoba's mountain-hawk
Hath on his best and bravest made her food,
In numbers confident, yon Chief shall balk
His Lord's imperial thirst for spoil and blood:
For full in view the promised conquest stood,
And Lisbon's matrons, from their walls, might sum
The myriads that had half the world subdued,
And hear the distant thunders of the drum,
That bids the band of France to storm and havoc come.

Don Roderick had removed the barrier and transgressed the prohibition of his ancestor, and had been apprised by the prodigies which he discovered of the approaching ruin of his kingdom.

* I have ventured to apply to the movements of the French army, that sublime passage in the prophecies of Joel which seems applicable to them in more respects than that I have adopted in the text. —See Joel, ii.

V.

Four moons have heard these thunders idly rolled,
Have seen these wistful myriads eye their prey,
As famished wolves survey a guarded fold—
But in the middle path, a Lion lay!
At length they move—but not to battle-fray,
Nor blaze yon fires where meets the manly fight;
Beacons of infamy, they light the way,
Where cowardice and cruelty unite,
To damn with double shame their ignominious flight.

VI.

O triumph for the Fiends of Lust and Wrath!
Ne'er to be told, yet ne'er to be forgot,
What wanton horrors marked their wrackful path!
The peasant butchered in his ruined cot,
The hoary priest even at the altar shot,
Childhood and age given o'er to sword and flame,
Woman to infamy;—no crime forgot,
By which inventive demons might proclaim
Immortal hate to Man, and scorn of God's great name!

VII.

The rudest sentinel, in Britain born,
With horror paused to view the havoc done,
Gave his poor crust to feed some wretch forlorn,*
Wiped his stern eye, then fiercer grasped his gun.

*Even the unexampled gallantry of the British army in the campaign of 1810-11, although they never fought but to conquer, will do them less honour in history than their humanity, attentive to soften to the utmost of their power the horrors which war, in its mildest aspect, must always inflict upon the defenceless inhabitants of the country in which it is waged, and which, on this occasion, were ten fold augmented by the barbarous cruelties of the French. Soup-kitchens were established by subscription among the officers, wherever the troops were quartered for any length of time. The commissaries contributed the heads, feet, &c. of the cattle slaughtered for the soldiery; rice, vegetables, and bread where it could be had, were purchased by the officers. Fifty or sixty starving peasants were daily fed at one of these regimental establishments, and carried home the relics to their famished households. The emaciated wretches, who could not crawl, from weakness, were speedily employed in pruning their vines. While pursuing Massena, the soldiers evinced the same spirit of humanity, and, in many instances, when reduced themselves to short allowance, from having out-marched their supplies, they shared their pittance with the starving inhabitants who had ventured back to view the ruins of their habitations, burned by the retreating enemy, and to bury the bodies of their relations whom they had butchered. Is it possible to know such facts without feeling a sort of confidence, that those who so well deserve victory are most likely to attain it? It is not the least of Lord Wellington's military merits, that the slightest disposition towards marauding meets immediate punishment. Independently of all moral obligation, the army which is most orderly in a friendly country has always proved most formidable to an armed enemy.

Nor with less zeal shall Britain's peaceful son
Exult the debt of sympathy to pay;
Riches nor poverty the tax shall shun,
Nor prince nor peer, the wealthy nor the gay,
Nor the poor peasant's mite, nor bard's more worthless lay.

VIII.

But thou—unfoughten wilt thou yield to Fate,
Minion of Fortune, now miscalled in vain!
Can vantage-ground no confidence create,
Marcella's pass, nor Guarda's mountain-chain?
Vain-glorious Fugitive!* yet turn again!
Behold, where, named by some Prophetic Seer,
Flows Honour's Fountain,† as fore-doomed the stain
From thy dishonoured name and arms to clear—
Fallen Child of Fortune, turn, redeem her favour here!

IX.

Yet, ere thou turn'st, collect each distant aid:
Those chiefs that never heard the Lion roar!
Within whose souls lives not a trace portrayed,
Of Talavera, or Mondego's shore!
Marshal each band thou hast, and summon more;
Of war's fell stratagems exhaust the whole;
Rank upon rank, squadron on squadron pour,
Legion on legion on thy foeman roll,
And weary out his arm—thou canst not quell his soul.

X.

O vainly gleams with steel Agueda's shore,
Vainly thy squadron's hide Assuava's plain,‡
And front the flying thunders as they roar,
With frantic charge, and tenfold odds, in vain!

*The French conducted this memorable retreat with much of the *fanfarronnade* proper to their country, by which they attempt to impose upon others, and perhaps on themselves, a belief that they are triumphing in the very moment of their discomfiture. On the 30th March, 1811, their rear-guard was overtaken near Pega by the British cavalry. Being well posted, and conceiving themselves safe from infantry (who were, indeed, many miles in the rear), and from artillery, they indulged themselves in parading their bands of music, and actually performed "God save the King." Their minstrelsy was, however, deranged by the undesired accompaniment of the British horse-artillery, on whose part in the concert they had not calculated. The surprise was sudden, and the rout complete; for the artillery and cavalry did execution upon them for about four miles, pursuing at a gallop as often as they got beyond the range of the guns.

†The literal translation of *Fuentes d'Honoro*.

‡In the severe action of Fuentes d'Honoro, upon 5th May, 1811, the grand mass of the French cavalry attacked the right of the British position, covered by two guns of the horse-artillery and two squadrons of cavalry. After suffering considerably from the fire of the guns, which annoyed them in every attempt to formation, the enemy turned their wrath entirely towards them, distributed brandy among their troopers, and advanced to carry the field pieces with the desperation

And what avails thee that, for CAMERON slain,*
Wild from his plaided ranks the yell was given—
Vengeance and grief gave mountain rage the rein,
And, at the bloody spear-point head-long driven,
The Despot's giant guards fled like the rack of heaven.

XI.

Go, baffled Boaster! teach thy haughty mood
To plead at thine imperious master's throne!
Say, thou hast left his legions in their blood,
Deceived his hopes, and frustrated thine own;
Say, that thine utmost skill and valour shown
By British skill and valour were outvied;
Last say, thy conqueror was WELLINGTON!
And if he chafe, be his own fortune tried—
God and our cause to friend, the venture we'll abide.

XII.

But ye, the heroes of that well-fought day,
How shall a bard, unknowing and unknown,
His meed to each victorious leader pay,
Or bind on every brow the laurels won?
Yet fain my harp would wake its boldest tone,
O'er the wide sea to hail CADOGAN brave;
And he, perchance, the minstrel note might own,
Mindful of meeting brief that Fortune gave
'Mid yon far western isles, that hear the Atlantic rave.

XIII.

Yes! hard the task, when Briton's wield the sword,
To give each Chief and every field its fame:
Hark! Albuera thunders BERESFORD,
And red Barossa shouts for dauntless GRÆME!
O for a verse of tumult and of flame,
Bold as the bursting of their cannon sound,

of drunken fury. They were in no ways checked by the heavy loss which they sustained in this daring attempt, but closed, and fairly mingled with the British cavalry, to whom they bore the proportion of ten to one. Captain Ramsay, who commanded the two guns, dismissed them at the gallop, and, putting himself at the head of the mounted artillerymen, ordered them to fall upon the French, sabre in hand. This very unexpected conversion of artillerymen into dragoons contributed greatly to the defeat of the enemy, already disconcerted by the reception they had met with from the two British squadrons; and the appearance of some small reinforcements, notwithstanding the immense disproportion of force, put them to absolute rout. A colonel or major of their cavalry, and many prisoners (almost all intoxicated) remained in our possession.

* The gallant Colonel Cameron was wounded mortally during the desperate contest in the streets of the village called Fuentes d'Honoro. He fell at the head of his native Highlanders, the 71st and 79th, who raised a dreadful shriek of grief and rage. They charged with irresistible fury the finest body of French grenadiers ever seen, being a part of Buonaparte's selected guard.

To bid the world re-echo to their fame!
For never, upon gory battle-ground,
With conquest's well-bought wreath were braver victors crowned!

XIV.

O who shall grudge him Albuera's bays,*
Who brought a race regenerate to the field,
Roused them to emulate their fathers' praise,
Tempered their headlong rage, their courage steeled,
And raised fair Lusitania's fallen shield,
And gave new edge to Lusitania's sword,
And taught her sons forgotten arms to wield—
Shivered my harp, and burst its every chord,
If it forget thy worth, victorious BERESFORD!

XV.

Not on that bloody field of battle won,
Though Gaul's proud legions rolled like mist away,
Was half his self-devoted valour shown,—
He gaged but life on that illustrious day;
But when he toiled those squadrons to array,
Who fought like Britons in the bloody game,
Sharper than Polish pike or assagay,
He braved the shafts of censure and of shame,
And dearer far than life, he pledged a soldier's fame.

XVI.

Nor be his praise o'erpassed who strove to hide
Beneath the warrior's vest affection's wound,
Whose wish, Heaven for his country's weal denied;
Danger and fate he sought, but glory found.
From clime to clime, where'er war's trumpets sound,
The wanderer went; yet, Caledonia! still
Thine was his thought in march and tented ground;
He dreamed 'mid Alpine cliffs of Athole's hill,
And heard in Ebro's roar his Lyndoch's lovely rill.

XVII.

O hero of a race renowned of old,
Whose war-cry oft has waked the battle-swell,
Since first distinguished in the onset bold,
Wild sounding when the Roman rampart fell!

*Nothing during the war of Portugal seems, to a distinct observer, more deserving of praise than the self-devotion of Field-Marshal Beresford, who was contented to undertake all the hazard of obloquy which might have been founded upon any miscarriage in the highly-important experiment of training the Portuguese troops to an improved state of discipline. In exposing his military reputation to the censure of imprudence from the most moderate, and all manner of unutterable calumnies from the ignorant and malignant, he placed at stake the dearest pledge which a military man had to offer; and nothing but the deepest conviction of the high and essential importance attached to success can be supposed an adequate motive.

By Wallace' side it rung the Southron's knell,
Alderne, Kilsythe, and Tibber owned its fame,
Tummell's rude pass can of its terrors tell,
But ne'er from prouder field arose the name,
Than when wild Ronda learned the conquering shout of GRÆME!*

XVIII.

But all too long, through seas unknown and dark,
(With Spenser's parable I close my tale,)†
By shoal and rock hath steered my venturous bark;
And landward now I drive before the gale:
And now the blue and distant shore I hail,
And nearer now I see the port expand,
And now I gladly furl my weary sail,
And, as the prow light touches on the strand,
I strike my red-cross flag, and bind my skiff to land.

* This stanza alludes to the various achievements of the warlike family of Græme, or Grahame.
† Faërie Queene, Book i. Canto xii.

ROKEBY.

A Poem.

IN SIX CANTOS.

TO

JOHN B. S. MORRITT, ESQ.,

THIS POEM,

THE SCENE OF WHICH IS LAID IN HIS BEAUTIFUL DEMESNE OF ROKEBY,

IS INSCRIBED,

IN TOKEN OF SINCERE FRIENDSHIP,

BY

WALTER SCOTT.

Dec. 31*st*, 1812.

ADVERTISEMENT TO FIRST EDITION, 1813.

The scene of this poem is laid at Rokeby, near Greta Bridge, in Yorkshire, and shifts to the adjacent fortress of Barnard Castle, and to other places in that vicinity.

The time occupied by the action is a space of Five Days, three of which are supposed to elapse between the end of the Fifth and beginning of the Sixth Canto.

The date of the supposed events is immediately subsequent to the great battle of Marston Moor, 3rd July, 1644. This period of public confusion has been chosen, without any purpose of combining the Fable with the Military or Political Events of the Civil War, but only as affording a degree of probability to the Fictitious Narrative now presented to the Public.

ROKEBY.

CANTO FIRST.

I.

The Moon is in her summer glow,
But hoarse and high the breezes blow,
And, racking o'er her face, the cloud
Varies the tincture of her shroud;
On Barnard's* towers, and Tees's stream,
She changes as a guilty dream,
When Conscience, with remorse and fear,
Goads sleeping Fancy's wild career.
Her light seemed now the blush of shame,
Seemed now fierce anger's darker flame,
Shifting that shade, to come and go,
Like apprehension's hurried glow;
Then sorrow's livery dims the air,
And dies in darkness, like despair.
Such varied hues the warder sees
Reflected from the woodland Tees,
Then from old Baliol's tower looks forth,
Sees the clouds mustering in the north,
Hears, upon turret-roof and wall,
By fits the plashing rain-drop fall,
Lists to the breeze's boding sound,
And wraps his shaggy mantle round.

* "Barnard Castle," saith old Leland, "standeth stately upon Tees." It is founded upon a very high bank, and its ruins impend over the river, including within the area a circuit of six acres and upwards. This once magnificent fortress derives its name from its founder, Barnard Baliol, the ancestor of the short and unfortunate dynasty of that name, which succeeded to the Scottish throne under the patronage of Edward I. and Edward III. Baliol's Tower, afterwards mentioned in the poem, is a round tower of great size, situated at the western extremity of the building. It bears marks of great antiquity, and was remarkable for the curious constructon of its vaulted roof, which has been lately greatly injured by the operations of some persons to whom the tower has been leased for the purpose of making patent shot. The prospect from the top of Baliol's Tower commands a rich and magnificent view of the wooded valley of the Tees.

II.

Those towers, which in the changeful gleam
Throw murky shadows on the stream,
Those towers of Barnard hold a guest,
The emotions of whose troubled breast
In wild and strange confusion driven,
Rival the flitting rack of heaven.
Ere sleep stern OSWALD'S senses tied,
Oft had he changed his weary side,
Composed his limbs and vainly sought
By effort strong to banish thought.
Sleep came at length, but with a train
Of feelings true and fancies vain,
Mingling, in wild disorder cast,
The expected future with the past.
Conscience, anticipating time,
Already rues the enacted crime,
And calls her furies forth, to shake
The sounding scourge and hissing snake;
While her poor victim's outward throes
Bear witness to his mental woes,
And show what lesson may be read
Beside a sinner's restless bed.

III.

Thus Oswald's labouring feelings trace
Strange changes in his sleeping face,
Rapid and ominous as these
With which the moonbeams tinge the Tees.
There might be seen of shame the blush,
There anger's dark and fiercer flush,
While the perturbèd sleeper's hand
Seemed grasping dagger-knife, or brand.
Relaxed that grasp, the heavy sigh,
The tear in the half-opening eye,
The pallid cheek and brow confessed
That grief was busy in his breast;
Nor paused that mood—a sudden start
Impelled the life blood from the heart:
Features convulsed, and mutterings dread
Show terror reigns in sorrow's stead.
That pang the painful slumber broke,
And Oswald with a start awoke.

IV.

He woke, and feared again to close
His eyelids in such dire repose;
He woke,—to watch the lamp, and tell
From hour to hour the castle bell.
Or listen to the owlet's cry,
Or the sad breeze that whistles by,

Or catch, by fits, the tuneless rhyme
With which the warder cheats the time,
And envying think, how, when the sun
Bids the poor soldier's watch be done,
Couched on his straw, and fancy-free,
He sleeps like careless infancy.

V.

Far townward sounds a distant tread,
And Oswald, starting from his bed,
Hath caught it, though no human ear,
Unsharpened by revenge and fear,*
Could e'er distinguish horse's clank,
Until it reached the castle bank.
Now nigh and plain the sound appears,
The warder's challenge now he hears,
Then clanking chains and levers tell,
That o'er the moat the drawbridge fell,
And, in the castle court below,
Voices are heard, and torches glow,
As marshalling the stranger's way,
Straight for the room where Oswald lay;
The cry was,—"Tidings from the host,
Of weight—a messenger comes post."—
Stifling the tumult of his breast,
His answer Oswald thus expressed—
"Bring food and wine, and trim the fire;
Admit the stranger and retire."—

VI.

The stranger came with heavy stride,
The morion's† plumes his visage hide,

* I have had occasion to remark, in real life, the effect of keen and fervent anxiety in giving acuteness to the organs of sense.

† The use of complete suits of armour fell into disuse during the civil war, though they were still worn by leaders of rank and importance.—"In the reign of King James I.," says our military antiquary, "no great alterations were made in the articles of defensive armour, except that the buff-coat, or jerkin, which was originally worn under the curiass, now became frequently a substitute for it, it having been found that a good buff leather would of itself resist the stroke of a sword; this, however, only occasionally took place among the light-armed cavalry and infantry, complete suits of armour being still used among the heavy horse. Buff-coats continued to be worn by the city-trained bands till within the memory of persons now living, so that defensive armour may, in some measure, be said to have terminated in the same materials with which it began, that is, the skins of animals or leather."—*Grose's Military Antiquities.*

Of these buff-coats, which were worn over the corslet, several are yet preserved, and Captain Grose has given an engraving of one which was used in the time of Charles I. by Sir Francis Rhodes, Bart., of Balbrough Hall, Derbyshire. They were usually lined with silk or linen, secured before by buttons, or by a lace, and often richly decorated with gold or silver embroidery.

And the buff-coat, an ample fold,
Mantles his form's gigantic mould.
Full slender answer deigned he
To Oswald's anxious courtesy,
But marked, by a disdainful smile,
He saw and scorned the petty wile,
When Oswald changed the torch's place
Anxious that on the soldier's face
Its partial lustre might be thrown,
To show his looks, yet hide his own.
His guest, the while, laid slow aside
The ponderous cloak of tough bull's hide,
And to the torch glanced broad and clear
The corslet of a cuirassier;
Then from his brows the casque he drew,
And from the dank plume dashed the dew,
From gloves of mail relieved his hands,
And spread them to the kindling brands,
And, turning to the genial board,
Without a health, or pledge, or word
Of meet and social reverence said,
Deeply he drank and fiercely fed;
As free from ceremony's sway,
As famished wolf that tears his prey.

VII.

With deep impatience, tinged with fear,
His host beheld him gorge his cheer,
And quaff the full carouse, that lent
His brow a fiercer hardiment.
Now Oswald stood a space aside,
Now paced the room with hasty stride,
In feverish agony to learn
Tidings of deep and dread concern,
Cursing each moment that his guest
Protracted o'er his ruffian feast.
Yet viewing with alarm, at last,
The end of that uncouth repast,
Almost he seemed their haste to rue,
As, at his sign, his train withdrew,
And left him with the stranger, free
To question of his mystery.
Then did his silence long proclaim
A struggle between fear and shame.

VIII.

Much in the stranger's mien appears,
To justify suspicious fears,
On his dark face a scorching clime,*
And toil, had done the work of time,

* In this character I have attempted to sketch one of those West-Indian adventurers, who, during the course of the seventeenth

Roughened the brow, the temples bared,
And sable hairs with silver shared,
Yet left—what age alone could tame—
The lip of pride, the eye of flame,
The full-drawn lip that upward curled,
The eye, that seemed to scorn the world,
That lip had terror never blenched;
Ne'er in that eye hath tear-drop quenched
The flash severe of swarthy glow,
That mocked at pain, and knew not woe;
Inured to danger's direst form,
Tornade and earthquake, flood and storm,
Death had he seen by sudden blow,
By wasting plague, by tortures slow,
By mine or breach, by steel or ball,
Knew all his shapes, and scorned them all.

IX.

But yet, though BERTRAM'S hardened look
Unmoved could blood and danger brook,
Still worse than apathy had place
On his swart brow and callous face;
For evil passions, cherished long,
Had ploughed them with impressions strong.
All that gives gloss to sin, all gay
Light folly, passed with youth away,
But rooted stood, in manhood's hour,
The weeds of vice without their flower.
And yet the soil in which they grew,
Had it been tamed when life was new,
Had depth and vigour to bring forth
The hardier fruits of virtuous worth.
Not that, e'en then, his heart had known
The gentler feelings' kindly tone;
But lavish waste had been refined
To bounty in his chastened mind,
And lust of gold, that waste to feed,
Been lost in love of glory's meed,
And, frantic then no more, his pride
Had ta'en fair virtue for its guide.

X.

Even now, by conscience unrestrained,
Clogged by gross vice, by slaughter stained,
Still knew his daring soul to soar,
And mastery o'er the mind he bore;

century, were popularly known by the name of Buccaneers. The successes of the English in the predatory incursions upon Spanish America, during the reign of Elizabeth, had never been forgotten: and from that period downward, the exploits of Drake and Raleigh were imitated, upon a smaller scale, indeed, but with equally desperate valour, by small bands of pirates, gathered from all nations, but chiefly French and English.

For meaner guilt, or heart less hard,
Quailed beneath Bertram's bold regard.
And this felt Oswald, while in vain,
He strove, by many a winding train,
To lure his sullen guest to show,
Unasked, the news he longed to know,
While on far other subject hung
His heart, than faltered from his tongue.
Yet nought for that his guest did deign
To note or spare his secret pain,
But still, in stern and stubborn sort,
Returned him answer dark and short,
Or started from the theme, to range
In loose digression wild and strange,
And forced the embarrassed host to buy
By query close, direct reply.

XI.

A while he glozed upon the cause
Of Commons, Covenant, and Laws,
And Church reformed—but felt rebuke
Beneath grim Bertram's sneering look.
Then stammered—"Has a field been fought?
Has Bertram news of battle brought?
For sure a soldier, famed so far
In foreign fields for feats of war,
On eve of fight ne'er left the host,
Until the field were won or lost."—
"Here, in your towers by circling Tees,
You, Oswald Wycliffe, rest at ease;
Why deem it strange that others come
To share such safe and easy home,
From fields where danger, death, and toil,
Are the reward of civil broil?"—
—"Nay, mock not, friend!—since well we know
The near advances of the foe,
To mar our northern army's work,
Encamped before beleaguered York;
Thy horse with valiant Fairfax lay,
And must have fought—how went the day?"

XII.

"Wouldst hear the tale?—On Marston heath*
Met, front to front, the ranks of death;
Flourished the trumpets fierce, and now
Fired was each eye, and flushed each brow;
On either side loud clamours ring,
'God and the Cause!'—'God and the King!'
Right English all, they rushed to blows,
With nought to win, and all to lose.

* The well-known and desperate battle of Long-Marston Moor, which terminated so unfortunately for the cause of Charles, commenced under very different auspices.

I could have laughed—but lacked the time—
To see, in phrenesy sublime,
How the fierce zealots fought and bled,
For king or state, as humour led;
Some for a dream of public good,
Some for church-tippet, gown and hood,
Draining their veins, in death to claim
A patriot's or a martyr's name.—
Led Bertram Risingham the hearts,
That countered there on adverse parts,
No superstitious fool had I
Sought El Dorados in the sky!
Chili had heard me through her states,
And Lima oped her silver gates,
Rich Mexico I had marched through,
And sacked the splendours of Peru,
Till sunk Pizarro's daring name,
And, Cortez, thine, in Bertram's fame."
—"Still from the purpose wilt thou stray!
Good gentle friend, how went the day?"

XIII.

—"Good am I deemed at trumpet-sound,
And good where goblets dance the round,
Though gentle ne'er was joined, till now,
With rugged Bertram's breast and brow.—
But I resume. The battle's rage
Was like the strife which currents wage,
Where Orinoco, in his pride,
Rolls to the main no tribute tide,
But 'gainst broad ocean urges far
A rival sea of roaring war;
While, in ten thousand eddies driven,
The billows fling their foam to heaven,
And the pale pilot seeks in vain,
Where rolls the river, where the main.
Even thus, upon the bloody field,
The eddying tides of conflict wheeled
Ambiguous, till that heart of flame,
Hot Rupert, on our squadrons came,
Hurling against our spears a line
Of gallants, fiery as their wine;
Then ours, though stubborn in their zeal,
In zeal's despite began to reel.
What wouldst thou more?—in tumult tossed,
Our leaders fell, our ranks were lost.
A thousand men, who drew the sword
For both the Houses and the Word,
Preached forth from hamlet, grange, and down
To curb the crosier and the crown,
Now, stark and stiff, lie stretched in gore,
And ne'er shall rail at mitre more.—

Thus fared it, when I left the fight,
With the good Cause and Commons' right."—

XIV.

"Disastrous news!" dark Wycliffe said;
Assumed despondence bent his head,
While troubled joy was in his eye,
The well-feigned sorrow to belie.—
"Disastrous news!—when needed most,
Told ye not that your chiefs were lost?—
Complete the woeful tale, and say,
Who fell upon that fatal day;
What leaders of repute and name
Bought by their death a deathless fame?
If such my direst foeman's doom,
My tears shall dew his honoured tomb—
No answer?—Friend, of all our host,
Thou know'st whom I should hate the most,
Whom thou too, once, wert wont to hate,
Yet leavest me doubtful of his fate."—
With look unmoved,—"Of friend or foe,
Aught," answered Bertram, "wouldst thou know,
Demand in simple terms and plain,
A soldier's answer shalt thou gain;
For question dark, or riddle high,
I have not judgment nor reply."

XV.

The wrath his art and fear suppressed,
Now blazed at once in Wycliffe's breast;
And brave, from man so meanly born,
Roused his hereditary scorn.
"Wretch! hast thou paid thy bloody debt?
PHILIP OF MORTHAM, lives he yet?
False to thy patron or thine oath,
Trait'rous or perjured, one or both.
Slave! hast thou kept thy promise plight,
To slay thy leader in the fight?"
Then from his seat the soldier sprung,
And Wycliffe's hand he strongly wrung;
His grasp, as hard as glove of mail,
Forced the red blood-drop from the nail—
"A health!" he cried; and, ere he quaffed,
Flung from him Wycliffe's hand, and laughed:
—"Now, Oswald Wycliffe, speaks thy heart!
Now play'st thou well thy genuine part!
Worthy, but for thy craven fear,
Like me to roam a buccaneer.
What reck'st thou of the Cause divine,
If Mortham's wealth and lands be thine?
What carest thou for beleaguered York,
If this good hand have done its work?

Or what, though Fairfax and his best
Are reddening Marston's swarthy breast,
If Philip Mortham with them lie,
Lending his life-blood to the dye?—
Sit, then! and as 'mid comrades free
Carousing after victory,
When tales are told of blood and fear,
That boys and women shrink to hear,
From point to point I frankly tell
The deed of death as it befell.

XVI.

"When purposed vengeance I forego,
Term me a wretch, nor deem me foe;
And when an insult I forgive,
Then brand me as a slave, and live!—
Philip of Mortham is with those
Whom Bertram Risingham calls foes:
Or whom more sure revenge attends,
If numbered with ungrateful friends.
As was his wont, ere battle glowed,
Along the marshalled ranks he rode,
And wore his visor up the while.
I saw his melancholy smile,
When, full opposed in front, he knew
Where ROKEBY's kindred banner flew.
'And thus,' he said, 'will friends divide!'—
I heard, and thought how, side by side,
We two had turned the battle's tide,
In many a well-debated field,
Where Bertram's breast was Philip's shield.
I thought on Darien's deserts pale,
Where death bestrides the evening gale,
How o'er my friend my cloak I threw,
And fenceless faced the deadly dew:
I thought on Quariana's cliff,
Where, rescued from our foundering skiff,
Through the white breakers' wrath I bore
Exhausted Mortham to the shore;
And when his side an arrow found,
I sucked the Indian's venomed wound.
These thoughts like torrents rushed along,
To sweep away my purpose strong.

XVII.

"Hearts are not flint, and flints are rent;
Hearts are not steel, and steel is bent.
When Mortham bade me, as of yore,
Be near him in the battle's roar,
I scarcely saw the spears laid low,
I scarcely heard the trumpets blow;
Lost was the war in inward strife,
Debating Mortham's death or life.

'Twas then I thought, how, lured to come,
As partner of his wealth and home,
Years of piratic wandering o'er,
With him I sought our native shore.
But Mortham's lord grew far estranged
From the bold heart with whom he ranged;
Doubts, horrors, superstitious fears,
Saddened and dimmed descending years;
The wily priests their victim sought,
And damned each free-born deed and thought.
Then must I seek another home,
My licence shook his sober dome;
If gold he gave, in one wild day
I revelled thrice the sun away.
An idle outcast then I strayed,
Unfit for tillage or for trade.
Deemed, like the steel of rusted lance,
Useless and dangerous at once.
The women feared my hardy look,
At my approach the peaceful shook;
The merchant saw my glance of flame,
And locked his hoards when Bertram came;
Each child of coward peace kept far
From the neglected son of war.

XVIII.

"But civil discord gave the call,
And made my trade the trade of all.
By Mortham urged, I came again
His vassals to the fight to train.
What guerdon waited on my care?
I could not cant of creed or prayer;
Sour fanatics each trust obtained,
And I, dishonoured and disdained,
Gained but the high and happy lot,
In these poor arms to front the shot!—
All this thou know'st, thy gestures tell;
Yet hear it o'er, and mark it well.
'Tis honour bids me now relate
Each circumstance of Mortham's fate.

XIX.

"Thoughts, from the tongue that slowly part,
Glance quick as lightning through the heart.
As my spur pressed my courser's side,
Philip of Mortham's cause was tried,
And, ere the charging squadrons mixed,
His plea was cast, his doom was fixed.
I watched him through the doubtful fray,
That changed as March's moody day,
Till, like a stream that bursts its bank,
Fierce Rupert thundered on our flank.

'Twas then, 'midst tumult, smoke, and strife,
Where each man fought for death or life,
'Twas then I fired my petronel,*
And Mortham, steed and rider, fell.
One dying look he upward cast,
Of wrath and anguish—'twas his last.
Think not that there I stopped to view
What of the battle should ensue;
But ere I cleared that bloody press,
Our northern horse ran masterless;
Monckton and Mitton† told the news,
How troops of Roundheads choked the Ouse,
And many a bonny Scot, aghast,
Spurring his palfrey northward, passed,
Cursing the day when zeal or meed
First lured their Lesley o'er the Tweed.
Yet when I reached the banks of Swale,
Had rumour learned another tale;
With his barbed horse, fresh tidings say,
Stout Cromwell‡ has redeemed the day;
But whether false the news, or true,
Oswald, I reck as light as you."——

XX.

Not then by Wycliffe might be shown,
How his pride startled at the tone
In which his complice, fierce and free,
Asserted guilt's equality.
In smoothest terms his speech he wove,
Of endless friendship, faith, and love;
Promised and vowed in courteous sort,
But Bertram broke professions short.
"Wycliffe, be sure not here I stay,
No, scarcely till the rising day;
Warned by the legends of my youth,
I trust not an associate's truth.
Do not my native dales prolong
Of Percy Rede§ the tragic song,

* A kind of blunderbuss, or horse-pistol.—*Halliwell, Arch. Dict.*

† Monckton and Mitton are villages near the river Ouse, and not very distant from the field of battle. The particulars of the action were violently disputed at the time.

‡ Cromwell, with his regiment of cuirassiers, had a principal share in turning the fate of the day at Marston Moor; which was equally matter of triumph to the Independents, and of grief and heart-burning to the Presbyterians and to the Scottish.

§ In a poem entitled "The Lay of the Reedwater Minstrel," Newcastle, 1809, this tale, with many others peculiar to the valley of the Reed, is commemorated:—"The particulars of the traditional story of Parcy Reed of Troughend, and the Halls of Girsonfield, the author had from a descendant of the family of Reed. From his account, it appears that Percival Reed, Esq., a keeper of Reedsdale, was betrayed by the Halls (hence denominated the false-hearted

Trained forward to his bloody fall,
By Girsonfield, that treacherous Hall?
Oft, by the Pringle's haunted side,
The shepherd sees his spectre glide.
And near the spot that gave me name,
The moated mound of Risingham,
Where Reed upon her margin sees
Sweet Woodburn's cottages and trees,
Some ancient sculptor's art has shown
An outlaw's image on the stone:*
Unmatched in strength, a giant he,
With quivered back, and kirtled knee.
Ask how he died, that hunter bold,
The tameless monarch of the wold,
And age and infancy can tell,
By brother's treachery he fell.—
Thus warned by legends of my youth,
I trust to no associate's truth.

XXI.

"When last we reasoned of this deed,
Nought, I bethink me, was agreed,

Ha's) to a band of moss-troopers of the name of Crosier, who slew him at Batinghope, near the source of the Reed.

"The Halls were, after the murder of Parcy Reed, held in such universal abhorrence and contempt by the inhabitants of Reedsdale for their cowardly and treacherous behaviour, that they were obliged to leave the country." In another passage we are informed, that the ghost of the injured borderer is supposed to haunt the banks of a brook called the Pringle. These Redes of Troughend were a very ancient family, as may be conjectured from their deriving their surname from the river on which they had their mansion. An epitaph on one of their tombs affirms, that the family held their lands of Troughend, which are situated on the Reed, nearly opposite to Otterburn, for the incredible space of nine hundred years.

*Risingham, upon the river Reed, near the beautiful hamlet of Woodburn, is an ancient Roman station, formerly called the Habitançum. Camden says, that in his time the popular account bore that it had been the abode of a deity, or giant, called Magon; and appeals, in support of this tradition, as well as to the etymology of Risingham, or Reisenham, which signifies, in German, the habitation of the giants, to two Roman altars, taken out of the river, inscribed, DEO MOGONTI CADENORUM. About half a mile distant from Risingham, upon an eminence covered with scattered birch-trees and fragments of rock, there is cut upon a large rock in *alto relievo*, a remarkable figure, called Robin of Risingham, or Robin of Reedsdale. It presents a Hunter, with his bow raised in one hand, and in the other what seems to be a hare. There is a quiver at the back of the figure, and he is dressed in a long coat or kirtle, coming down to the knees, and meeting close, with a girdle bound round him. The popular tradition is, that it represents a giant, whose brother resided at Woodburn, and he himself at Risingham. It adds that they subsisted by hunting, and that one of them, finding the game become too scarce to support them, poisoned his companion, in whose memory the monument was engraven. What strange and tragic circumstance may be concealed under this legend, or whether it is utterly apocryphal, it is now impossible to discover.

Or by what rule, or when, or where,
The wealth of Mortham we should share;
Then list, while I the portion name,
Our differing laws give each to claim.
Thou, vassal sworn to England's throne
Her rules of heritage must own;
They deal thee, as to nearest heir,
Thy kinsman's lands and livings fair,
And these I yield:—do thou revere
The statutes* of the buccaneer.
Friend to the sea, and foeman sworn
To all that on her waves are borne,
When falls a mate in battle broil,
His comrade heirs his portioned spoil;
When dies in fight a daring foe,
He claims his wealth who struck the blow;
And either rule to me assigns
Those spoils of Indian seas and mines,
Hoarded in Mortham's caverns dark;
Ingot of gold and diamond spark,
Chalice and plate from churches borne,
And gems from shrieking beauty torn,
Each string of pearl, each silver bar,
And all the wealth of western war.
I go to search, where, dark and deep,
Those Trans-Atlantic treasures sleep.
Thou must along—for, lacking thee,
The heir will scarce find entrance free;
And then farewell. I haste to try
Each varied pleasure wealth can buy;
When cloyed each wish, these wars afford
Fresh work for Bertram's restless sword."—

XXII.

An undecided answer hung
On Oswald's hesitating tongue.
Despite his craft, he heard with awe
This ruffian stabber fix the law;
While his own troubled passions veer,
Through hatred, joy, regret, and fear;—
Joyed at the soul that Bertram flies,
He grudged the murderer's mighty prize,
Hated his pride's presumptuous tone,
And feared to wend with him alone.
At length, that middle course to steer,
To cowardice and craft so dear,
"His charge," he said, "would ill allow
His absence from the fortress now;

* The "statutes of the buccaneers" were in reality more equitable than could have been expected from the state of society under which they had been formed. They chiefly related, as may readily be conjectured, to the distribution and the inheritance of their plunder.

WILFRID on Bertram should attend,
His son should journey with his friend."—

XXIII.

Contempt kept Bertram's anger down,
And wreathed to savage smile his frown.
"Wilfrid, or thou—'tis one to me,
Whichever bears the golden key.
Yet think not but I mark, and smile
To mark thy poor and selfish wile!
If injury from me you fear,
What, Oswald Wycliffe, shields thee here?
I've sprung from walls more high than these,
I've swam through deeper streams than Tees.
Might I not stab thee, ere one yell
Could rouse the distant sentinel?
Start not—it is not my design,
But, if it were, weak fence were thine;
And, trust me, that, in time of need,
This hand hath done more desperate deed.—
Go, haste and rouse thy slumbering son;
Time calls, and I must needs be gone."—

XXIV.

Nought of his sire's ungenerous part
Polluted Wilfrid's gentle heart;
A heart, too soft from early life
To hold with fortune needful strife.
His sire, while yet a hardier race
Of numerous sons were Wycliffe's grace,
On Wilfrid set contemptuous brand,
For feeble heart and forceless hand;
But a fond mother's care and joy
Were centred in her sickly boy.
No touch of childhood's frolic mood
Showed the elastic spring of blood;
Hour after hour he loved to pore
On Shakespeare's rich and varied lore,
But turned from martial scenes and light,
From Falstaff's feast and Percy's fight,
To ponder Jaques' moral strain,
And muse with Hamlet, wise in vain;
And weep himself to soft repose
O'er gentle Desdemona's woes.

XXV.

In youth he sought not pleasures found
By youth in horse, and hawk, and hound,
But loved the quiet joys that wake
By lonely stream and silent lake;
In Deepdale's solitude to lie,
Where all is cliff, and copse, and sky;

To climb Catcastle's dizzy peak,
Or lone Pendragon's mound to seek.
Such was he wont; and there his dream
Soared on some wild fantastic theme,
Of faithful love, or ceaseless Spring,
Till Contemplation's wearied wing
The enthusiast could no more sustain,
And sad he sunk to earth again.

XXVI.

He loved—as many a lay can tell,
Preserved in Stanmore's lonely dell;
For his was minstrel's skill, he caught
The art unteachable, untaught;
He loved—his soul did nature frame
For love, and fancy nursed the flame.
Vainly he loved—for seldom swain
Of such soft mould is loved again;
Silent he loved—in every gaze
Was passion, friendship in his phrase.
So mused his life away—till died
His brethren all, their father's pride.
Wilfrid is now the only heir
Of all his stratagems and care,
And destined, darkling, to pursue
Ambition's maze by Oswald's clue.

XXVII.

Wilfrid must love and woo the bright
Matilda, heir of Rokeby's knight.
To love her was an easy hest,*
The secret empress of his breast;
To woo her was a harder task
To one that durst not hope or ask.
Yet all Matilda could, she gave
In pity to her gentle slave;
Friendship, esteem, and fair regard,
And praise, the poet's best reward!
She read the tales his taste approved,
And sung the lays he framed or loved;
Yet, loth to nurse the fatal flame
Of hopeless love in friendship's name,
In kind caprice she oft withdrew
The favouring glance to friendship due,
Then grieved to see her victim's pain,
And gave the dangerous smiles again.

XXVIII.

So did the suit of Wilfrid stand,
When war's loud summons waked the land.
Three banners, floating o'er the Tees,
The woe-foreboding peasant sees;

* Command.

In concert oft they braved of old
The bordering Scot's incursion bold;
Frowning defiance in their pride,
Their vassals now and lords divide.
From his fair hall on Greta banks,
The Knight of Rokeby led his ranks,
To aid the valiant northern Earls
Who drew the sword for royal Charles;
Mortham, by marriage near allied,—
His sister had been Rokeby's bride,
Though long before the civil fray,
In peaceful grave the lady lay,—
Philip of Mortham raised his band,
And marched at Fairfax's command;
While Wycliffe, bound by many a train
Of kindred art with wily Vane,
Less prompt to brave the bloody field,
Made Barnard's battlements his shield,
Secured them with his Lunedale powers,
And for the Commons held the towers.

XXIX.

The lovely heir of Rokeby's knight
Waits in the halls the event of fight;
For England's war revered the claim
Of every unprotected name,
And spared, amid its fiercest rage,
Childhood, and womanhood, and age.
But Wilfrid, son to Rokeby's foe,
Must the dear privilege forego,
By Greta's side, in evening grey,
To steal upon Matilda's way,
Striving, with fond hypocrisy,
For careless step and vacant eye:
Calming each anxious look and glance,
To give the meeting all to chance,
Or framing as a fair excuse,
The book, the pencil, or the muse;
Something to give, to sing, to say,
Some modern tale, some ancient lay.
Then, while the longed-for minutes last,—
Ah! minutes quickly over-passed!—
Recording each expression free,
Of kind or careless courtesy,
Each friendly look, each softer tone,
As food for fancy when alone.
All this is o'er—but still, unseen,
Wilfrid may lurk in Eastwood green,
To watch Matilda's wonted round,
While springs his heart at every sound.
She comes!—'tis but a passing sight,
Yet serves to cheat his weary night;

She comes not—He will wait the hour,
When her lamp lightens in the tower:
'Tis something yet, if, as she passed,
Her shade is o'er the lattice cast.
"What is my life, my hope?" he said;
"Alas! a transitory shade."—

XXX.

Thus wore his life, though reason strove
For mastery in vain with love,
Forcing upon his thoughts the sum
Of present woe and ills to come,
While still he turned impatient ear
From Truth's intrusive voice severe.
Gentle, indifferent, and subdued,
In all but this, unmoved he viewed
Each outward change of ill and good:
But Wilfrid, docile, soft, and mild,
Was Fancy's spoiled and wayward child;
In her bright car she bade him ride,
With one fair form to grace his side,
Or, in some wild and lone retreat,
Flung her high spells around his seat,
Bathed in her dews his languid head,
Her fairy mantle o'er him spread;
For him her opiates gave to flow,
Which he who tastes, can ne'er forego,
And placed him in her circle, free
From every stern reality,
Till, to the Visionary, seem
Her day-dreams truth, and truth a dream.

XXXI.

Woe to the youth whom Fancy gains,
Winning from Reason's hand the reins,
Pity and woe! for such a mind
Is soft, contemplative, and kind;
And woe to those who train such youth,
And spare to press the rights of truth,
The mind to strengthen and anneal,
While on the stithy glows the steel!
O teach him, while your lessons last
To judge the present by the past;
Remind him of each wish pursued,
How rich it glowed with promised good;
Remind him of each wish enjoyed,
How soon his hopes possession cloyed!
Tell him, we play unequal game,
Whene'er we shoot by Fancy's aim;
And, ere he strip him for her race,
Show the conditions of the chase.
Two Sisters by the goal are set.
Cold Disappointment and Regret.

One disenchants the winner's eyes,
And strips of all its worth the prize.
While one augments its gaudy show,
More to enhance the loser's woe.
The victor sees his fairy gold,
Transformed, when won, to drossy mold,
But still the vanquished mourns his loss,
And rues, as gold, that glittering dross.

XXXII.

More wouldst thou know—yon tower survey,
Yon couch unpressed since parting day,
Yon untrimmed lamp, whose yellow gleam,
Is mingling with the cold moonbeam,
And yon thin form!—the hectic red
On his pale cheek unequal spread;
The head reclined, the loosened hair,
The limbs relaxed, the mournful air.—
See, he looks up;—a woful smile
Lightens his woe-worn cheek a while,—
'Tis Fancy wakes some idle thought,
To gild the ruin she has wrought;
For, like the bat of Indian brakes,
Her pinions fan the wound she makes,
And soothing thus the dreamer's pain,
She drinks his life-blood from the vein.
Now to the lattice turn his eyes,
Vain hope! to see the sun arise.
The moon with clouds is still o'ercast;
Still howls by fits the stormy blast;
Another hour must wear away,
Ere the East kindle into day,
And, hark! to waste that weary hour,
He tries the minstrel's magic power.

XXXIII.

SONG.

TO THE MOON.

Hail to thy cold and clouded beam,
Pale pilgrim of the troubled sky!
Hail, though the mists that o'er thee stream
Lend to thy brow their sullen dye!
How should thy pure and peaceful eye
Untroubled view our scenes below,
Or how a tearless beam supply
To light a world of war and woe!

Fair Queen! I will not blame thee now,
As once by Greta's fairy side;
Each little cloud that dimmed thy brow
Did then an angel's beauty hide.

And of the shades I then could chide,
Still are the thoughts to memory dear,
For, while a softer strain I tried,
They hid my blush, and calmed my fear.

Then did I swear thy ray serene
Was formed to light some lonely dell,
By two fond lovers only seen,
Reflected from the crystal well,
Or sleeping on their mossy cell,
Or quivering on the lattice bright,
Or glancing on their couch, to tell
How swiftly wanes the summer night!

XXXIV.

He starts—a step at this lone hour!
A voice!—his father seeks the tower,
With haggard look and troubled sense,
Fresh from his dreadful conference.
"Wilfrid!—what, not to sleep addressed?
Thou hast no cares to chase thy rest.
Mortham has fallen on Marston-moor:
Bertram brings warrant to secure
His treasures, bought by spoil and blood,
For the state's use and public good.
The menials will thy voice obey;
Let his commission have its way,
In every point, in every word."—
Then, in a whisper,—"Take thy sword!
Bertram is—what I must not tell.
I hear his hasty step—farewell!"

CANTO SECOND.

I.

Far in the chambers of the west,
The gale had sighed itself to rest;
The moon was cloudless now and clear,
But pale, and soon to disappear.
The thin grey clouds waxed dimly light
On Brusleton and Houghton height;
And the rich dale, that eastward lay,
Waited the wakening touch of day.
To give its woods and cultured plain,
And towers and spires, to light again.
But, westward, Stanmore's shapeless swell,
And Lunedale wild, and Kelton-fell.

And rock-begirdled Gilmanscar,
And Arkingarth, lay dark afar;
While, as a livelier twilight falls,
Emerge proud Barnard's bannered walls.
High crowned he sits, in dawning pale,
The sovereign of the lovely vale.

II.

What prospects, from the watch-tower high,
Gleam gradual on the warder's eye!—
Far sweeping to the east, he sees
Down his deep woods the course of Tees,*
And tracks his wanderings by the steam
Of summer vapours from the stream;
And ere he pace his destined hour
By Brackenbury's dungeon-tower,
These silver mists shall melt away,
And dew the woods with glittering spray.
Then in broad lustre shall be shown
That mighty trench of living stone,
And each huge trunk that, from the side,
Reclines him o'er the darksome tide,
Where Tees, full many a fathom low,
Wears with his rage no common foe;
For pebbly bank, nor sand-bed here,
Nor clay-mound, checks his fierce career,
Condemned to mine a channelled way,
O'er solid sheets of marble grey.

III.

Nor Tees alone, in dawning bright,
Shall rush upon the ravished sight;
But many a tributary stream
Each from its own dark dell shall gleam:
Staindrop, who, from her sylvan bowers
Salutes proud Raby's battled towers;
The rural brook of Eglistone,
And Balder, named from Odin's son;
And Greta, to whose banks ere long
We lead the lovers of the song;
And silver Lune, from Stanmore wild,
And fairy Thorsgill's murmuring child,
And last and least, but loveliest still,
Romantic Deepdale's slender rill.

* The view from Barnard Castle commands the rich and magnificent valley of Tees. Immediately adjacent to the river, the banks are very thickly wooded; at a little distance they are more open and cultivated; but, being interspersed with hedge-rows, and with isolated trees of great size and age, they still retain the richness of woodland scenery. The river itself flows in a deep trench of solid rock, chiefly limestone and marble. The finest view of its romantic course is from a handsome modern bridge built over the Tees, by the late Mr. Morritt of Rokeby.

Who in that dim-wood glen hath strayed,
Yet longed for Roslin's magic glade?
Who, wandering there, hath sought to change,
Even for that vale so stern and strange,
Where Cartland's Crags, fantastic rent,
Through her green copse like spires are sent?
Yet, Albin, yet the praise be thine,
Thy scenes and story to combine!
Thou bidd'st him, who by Roslin strays,*
List to the deeds of other days;
'Mid Cartland's Crags thou show'st the cave,
The refuge of thy champion brave;
Giving each rock its storied tale,
Pouring a lay for every dale,
Knitting, as with a moral band,
Thy native legends with thy land,
To lend each scene the interest high
Which genius beams from beauty's eye.

IV.

Bertram awaited not the sight
Which sunrise shows from Barnard's height,
But from the towers, preventing day,
With Wilfrid took his early way,
While misty dawn, and moonbeam pale,
Still mingled in the silent dale.
By Barnard's bridge of stately stone,
The southern bank of Tees they won;
Their winding-path then eastward cast,
And Eglistone's† grey ruins passed;
Each on his own deep visions bent,
Silent and sad they onward went.
Well may you think that Bertram's mood,
To Wilfrid savage seemed and rude;
Well may you think bold Risingham
Held Wilfrid trivial, poor, and tame;
And small the intercourse, I ween,
Such uncongenial souls between.

V.

Stern Bertram shunned the nearer way,
Through Rokeby's park and chase that lay,
And, skirting high the valley's ridge,
They crossed by Greta's ancient bridge,

* See notes to "Lay of the Last Minstrel," pages 76 and 77.

† The ruins of this abbey or priory, for Tanner calls it the former, and Leland the latter, are beautifully situated upon the angle, formed by a little dell called Thorsgill, at its junction with the Tees. A good part of the religious house is still in some degree habitable, but the church is in ruins. Eglistone was dedicated to St. Mary and St. John the Baptist, and is supposed to have been founded by Ralph de Multon about the end of Henry the Second's reign. There were formerly the tombs of the families of Rokebys, Bowes, and Fitzhughs.

Descending where her waters wind
Free for a space and unconfined,
As, 'scaped from Brignal's dark wood glen
She seeks wild Mortham's deeper den.
There, as his eye glanced o'er the mound,
Raised by that Legion long renowned,
Whose votive shrine asserts their claim,
Of pious, faithful, conquering fame,*
"Stern sons of war!" sad Wilfrid sighed,
"Behold the boast of Roman pride!
What now of all your toils are known?
A grassy trench, a broken stone!"—
This to himself; for moral strain
To Bertram were addressed in vain.

VI.

Of different mood, a deeper sigh
Awoke, when Rokeby's† turrets high
Were northward in the dawning seen
To rear them o'er the thicket green.
O then, though Spenser's self had strayed
Beside him through the lovely glade,
Lending his rich luxuriant glow
Of Fancy, all its charms to show,
Pointing the stream rejoicing free,
As captive set at liberty,
Flashing her sparkling waves abroad,
And clamouring joyful on her road;
Pointing where, up the sunny banks,
The trees retire in scattered ranks,
Save where, advanced before the rest,
On knoll or hillock rears his crest,
Lonely and huge, the giant Oak;
As champions, when their band is broke,
Stand forth to guard the rearward post,
The bulwark of the scattered host—

* Close behind the George Inn, at Greta-bridge, there is a well-preserved Roman encampment, surrounded with a triple ditch, lying between the river Greta and a brook, called the Tutta. The four entrances are easily to be discerned. Very many Roman altars and monuments have been found in the vicinity, most of which are preserved at Rokeby by my friend Mr. Morritt.

† This ancient manor long gave name to a family by whom it is said to have been possessed from the Conquest downward, and who are at different times distinguished in history. It was the baron of Rokeby who finally defeated the insurrection of the earl of Northumberland, *tempore Hen. IV.*, of which Hollinshed gives an account.

The Rokeby, or Rokesby, family continued to be distinguished until the great civil war, when, having embraced the cause of Charles I., they suffered severely by fines and confiscations. The estate then passed from its ancient possessors to the family of the Robinsons, from whom it was purchased by the father of my valued friend, the present proprietor.

All this, and more, might Spenser say,
Yet waste in vain his magic lay,
While Wilfrid eyed the distant tower,
Whose lattice lights Matilda's bower.

VII.

The open vale is soon passed o'er,
Rokeby, though nigh, is seen no more;
Sinking 'mid Greta's thickets deep,
A wild and darker course they keep,
A stern and lone, yet lovely road,
As e'er the foot of Minstrel trode!*
Broad shadows o'er their passage fell,
Deeper and narrower grew the dell;
It seemed some mountain rent and riven,
A channel for the stream had given,
So high the cliffs of limestone grey
Hung beetling o'er the torrent's way,
Yielding, along their rugged base,
A flinty footpath's niggard space,
Where he, who winds 'twixt rock and wave,
May hear the headlong torrent rave,
And like a steed in frantic fit,
That flings the froth from curb and bit,
May view her chafe her waves to spray,
O'er every rock that bars her way,
Till foam-globes on her eddies ride,
Thick as the schemes of human pride,
That down life's current drive amain,
As frail, as frothy, and as vain!

VIII.

The cliffs that rear their haughty head
High o'er the river's darksome bed,
Were now all naked, wild, and grey,
Now waving all with greenwood spray;
Here trees to every crevice clung,
And o'er the dell their branches hung;
And there, all splintered and uneven,
The shivered rocks ascend to heaven;
Oft, too, the ivy swathed their breast,
And wreathed its garland round their crest,
Or from the spires bade loosely flare
Its tendrils in the middle air.

* What follows is an attempt to describe the romantic glen, or rather ravine, through which the Greta finds a passage between Rokeby and Mortham, the former situated upon the left bank of Greta, the latter on the right bank, about half a mile nearer to its junction with the Tees. The river runs with very great rapidity over a bed of solid rock, broken by many shelving descents, down which the stream dashes with great noise and impetuosity, vindicating its etymology, which has been derived from the Gothic, *Gridan*, to clamour.

As pennons wont to wave of old
O'er the high feast of Baron bold,
When revelled loud the feudal rout,
And the arched halls returned their shout;
Such and more wild is Greta's roar,
And such the echoes from her shore.
And so the ivied banners' gleam
Waved wildly o'er the brawling stream.

IX.

Now from the stream the rocks recede,
But leave between no sunny mead,
No, nor the spot of pebbly sand,
Oft found by such a mountain strand;
Forming such warm and dry retreat,
As fancy deems the lonely seat,
Where hermit, wandering from his cell,
His rosary might love to tell.
But here, 'twixt rock and river grew
A dismal grove of sable yew,
With whose sad tints were mingled seen
The blighted fir's sepulchral green.
Seemed that the trees their shadows cast
The earth that nourished them to blast;
For never knew that swarthy grove
The verdant hue that fairies love;
Nor wilding green, nor woodland flower,
Arose within its baleful bower;
The dank and sable earth receives
Its only carpet from the leaves,
That from the withering branches cast,
Bestrewed the ground with every blast.
Though now the sun was o'er the hill,
In this dark spot 'twas twilight still,
Save that on Greta's farther side
Some straggling beams through copsewood glide
And wild and savage contrast made
That dingle's deep and funeral shade,
With the bright tints of early day,
Which, glimmering through the ivy spray,
On the opposing summit lay.

X.

The lated* peasant shunned the dell;
For Superstition wont to tell
Of many a grisly sound and sight,
Scaring its path at dead of night.
When Christmas logs blaze high and wide,
Such wonders speed the festal tide
While Curiosity and Fear,
Pleasure and Pain, sit crouching near

* Belated.

Till childhood's cheek no longer glows,
And village maidens lose the rose.
The thrilling interest rises higher,
The circle closes nigh and nigher,
And shuddering glance is cast behind,
As louder moans the wintry wind.
Believe, that fitting scene was laid
For such wild tales in Mortham glade;
For who had seen on Greta's side,
By that dim light fierce Bertram stride,
In such a spot, at such an hour,—
If touched by Superstition's power,
Might well have deemed that Hell had given
A murderer's ghost to upper heaven,
While Wilfrid's form had seemed to glide
Like his pale victim by his side.

XI.

Nor think to village swains alone
Are these unearthly terrors known;
For not to rank nor sex confined
Is this vain ague of the mind:
Hearts firm as steel, as marble hard,
'Gainst faith, and love, and pity barred
Have quaked, like aspen leaves in May,
Beneath its universal sway.
Bertram had listed many a tale
Of wonder in his native dale,
That in his secret soul retained
The credence they in childhood gained,
Nor less his wild adventurous youth
Believed in every legend's truth,
Learned when, beneath the tropic gale,
Full swelled the vessel's steady sail,
And the broad Indian moon her light
Poured on the watch of middle night,
When seamen love to hear and tell
Of portent, prodigy, and spell;
What gales are sold on Lapland's shore,*
How whistle rash bids tempests roar,†

*Olaus Magnus (Hist. of the Goths, Swedes, and Vandals) relates that the Finlanders were wont to sell winds to merchants detained on their coasts by contrary weather.

†That this is a general superstition is well known to all who have been on ship-board, or who have conversed with seamen. The most formidable whistler that I remember to have met with was the apparition of a certain Mrs. Leakey, who, about 1636, resided, we are told, at Mynehead, in Somerset, where her only son drove a considerable trade between that port and Waterford, and was owner of several vessels. This old gentlewoman was of social disposition, and so acceptable to her friends, that they used to say to her and to each other, it were pity such an excellent good-natured old lady should die; to which she was wont to reply, that whatever pleasure they might find in her company just now, they

Of witch, of mermaid, and of sprite,
Of Erick's cap and Elmo's light;*
Or of that Phantom Ship, whose form
Shoots like a meteor through the storm;
When the dark scud comes driving hard,
And lowered is every top-sail yard,
And canvass, wove in earthly looms,
No more to brave the storm presumes!
Then 'mid the war of sea and sky,
Top and top-gallant hoisted high,
Full spread and crowded every sail,
The Demon Frigate† braves the gale;
And well the doomed spectators know
The harbinger of wreck and woe.

XII.

Then, too, were told, in stifled tone,
Marvels and omens all their own;
How, by some desert isle or key,‡
Where Spaniards wrought their cruelty,

would not greatly like to see or converse with her after death, which nevertheless she was apt to think might happen. Accordingly, after her death and funeral, she began to appear to various persons by night and by noonday, in her own house, in the town and fields, at sea and upon shore. So far had she departed from her former urbanity, that she is recorded to have kicked a doctor of medicine for his impolite negligence in omitting to hand her over a stile. It was also her humour to appear upon the quay, and call for a boat.

* "This Ericus, king of Sweden, in his time was held second to none in the magical art: and he was so familiar with the evil spirits, which he exceedingly adored, that which way soever he turned his cap, the wind would presently blow that way. From this occasion he was called Windy Cap; and many men believed that Regnerus, king of Denmark, by the conduct of this Ericus, who was his nephew, did happily extend his piracy into the most remote parts of the earth, and conquered many countries and fenced cities by his cunning, and at last was his coadjutor; that by the consent of the nobles he should be chosen King of Sweden, which continued a long time with him very happily, until he died of old age."—*Olaus Magnus, Hist. of the Goths, Swedes, and Vandals.*

† This is an allusion to a well-known nautical superstition concerning a fantastic vessel, called by sailors the *Flying Dutchman*, and supposed to be seen about the latitude of the Cape of Good Hope. She is distinguished from earthly vessels by bearing a press of sail when all others are unable, from stress of weather, to show an inch of canvass.

‡ What contributed much to the security of the buccaneers about the Windward Islands, was the great number of little islets, called in that country *keys*. These are small sandy patches, appearing just above the surface of the ocean, covered only with a few bushes and weeds, but sometimes affording springs of water, and, in general, much frequented by turtle. Such little uninhabited spots afforded the pirates good harbours, either for refitting or for the purpose of ambush; they were occasionally the hiding-place of their treasure, and often afforded a shelter to themselves.

Or where the savage pirate's mood
Repaid it home in deeds of blood,
Strange nightly sounds of woe and fear
Appalled the listening buccaneer,
Whose light-armed shallop anchored lay
In ambush by the lonely bay.
The groan of grief, the shriek of pain,
Ring from the moonlight groves of cane;
The fierce adventurer's heart they scare,
Who wearies memory for a prayer,
Curses the roadstead, and with gale
Of early morning lifts the sail,
To give, in thirst of blood and prey,
A legend for another bay.

XIII.

Thus, as a man, a youth, a child
Trained in the mystic and the wild,
With this on Bertram's soul at times
Rushed a dark feeling of his crimes;
Such to his troubled soul their form,
As the pale death-ship to the storm,
And such their omen dim and dread,
As shrieks and voices of the dead.
That pang, whose transitory force
Hovered 'twixt horror and remorse;
That pang, perchance, his bosom pressed,
As Wilfrid sudden he addressed:—
"Wilfrid, this glen is never trod
Until the sun rides high abroad;
Yet twice have I beheld to-day
A form, that seemed to dog our way:
Twice from my glance it seemed to flee
And shroud itself by cliff or tree.
How think'st thou?—Is our path way-laid?
Or hath thy sire my trust betrayed?
If so "——Ere, starting from his dream,
That turned upon a gentler theme,
Wilfrid had roused him to reply,
Bertram sprang forward, shouting high,
"Whate'er thou art, thou now shalt stand!"—
And forth he darted, sword in hand.

XIV.

As bursts the levin in its wrath,
He shot him down the sounding path;
Rock, wood, and stream, rang wildly out,
To his loud step and savage shout.
Seems that the object of his race
Hath scaled the cliffs; his frantic chase
Sidelong he turns, and now 'tis bent
Right up the rock's tall battlement;

Straining each sinew to ascend,
Foot, hand, and knee, their aid must lend.
Wilfrid, all dizzy with dismay,
Views from beneath his dreadful way;
Now to the oak's warped roots he clings,
Now trusts his weight to ivy strings;
Now, like the wild goat, must he dare
An unsupported leap in air;
Hid in the shrubby rain-course now,
You mark him by the crashing bough,
And by his corslet's sullen clank,
And by the stones spurned from the bank,
And by the hawk scared from her nest,
And ravens croaking o'er their guest,
Who deem his forfeit limbs shall pay
The tribute of his bold essay.

XV.

See, he emerges!—desperate now
All farther course—Yon beetling brow,
In craggy nakedness sublime,
What heart or foot shall dare to climb?
It bears no tendril for his clasp,
Presents no angle to his grasp;
Sole stay his foot may rest upon,
Is yon earth-bedded jetting stone.
Balanced on such precarious prop,
He strains his grasp to reach the top.
Just as the dangerous stretch he makes,
By heaven, his faithless footstool shakes!
Beneath his tottering bulk it bends,
It sways, it loosens, it descends!
And downward holds its headlong way,
Crashing o'er rock and copsewood spray.
Loud thunders shake the echoing dell!—
Fell it alone?—alone it fell.
Just on the very verge of fate,
The hardy Bertram's falling weight
He trusted to his sinewy hands,
And on the top unharmed he stands!

XVI.

Wilfrid a safer path pursued,
At intervals where, roughly hewed,
Rude steps ascending from the dell
Rendered the cliffs accessible.
By circuit slow he thus attained
The height that Risingham had gained,
And when he issued from the wood,
Before the gate of Mortham stood.*

* The castle of Mortham, which Leland terms "Mr. Rokesby's place, in *ripa citer*, scant a quarter of mile from Greta-bridge, and

'Twas a fair scene! the sunbeam lay
On battled tower and portal grey,
And from the grassy slope he sees
The Greta flow to meet the Tees;
Where, issuing from her darksome bed,
She caught the morning's eastern red,
And through the softening vale below
Rolled her bright waves, in rosy glow,
All blushing, to her bridal bed,
Like some shy maid in convent bred,
While linnet, lark, and blackbird gay,
Sing forth her nuptial roundelay.

XVII.

'Twas sweetly sung that roundelay,
That summer morn shone blithe and gay;
But morning beam, and wild-bird's call,
Awaked not Mortham's silent hall.
No porter, by the low-browed gate,
Took in the wonted niche his seat;
To the paved court no peasant drew;
Waked to their toil no menial crew;
The maiden's carol was not heard,
As to her morning task she fared:
In the void offices around,
Rung not a hoof, nor bayed a hound;
Nor eager steed, with shrilling neigh,
Accused the lagging groom's delay;
Untrimmed, undressed, neglected now,
Was alleyed walk and orchard bough;
All spoke the master's absent care,
All spoke neglect and disrepair.
South of the gate, an arrow flight,
Two mighty elms their limbs unite,
As if a canopy, to spread
O'er the lone dwelling of the dead;
For their huge boughs in arches bent
Above a massive monument,
Carved o'er in ancient Gothic wise,
With many a scutcheon and device:
There, spent with toil and sunk in gloom,
Bertram stood pondering by the tomb.

not a quarter of mile beneath into Tees," is a picturesque tower, surrounded by buildings of different ages, now converted into a farm-house and offices. The battlements of the tower itself are singularly elegant, the architect having broken them at regular intervals into different heights; while those at the corners of the tower project into octangular turrets. The situation of Mortham is eminently beautiful, occupying a high bank, at the bottom of which the Greta winds out of the dark, narrow, and romantic dell, of which a description has been attempted in the text, and flows onward through a more open valley to meet the Tees, about a quarter of a mile from the castle. Mortham is surrounded by old trees, happily and widely grouped with Mr. Morritt's new plantations.

XVIII.

"It vanished like a flitting ghost!
Behind this tomb," he said, "'twas lost—
This tomb, where oft I deemed lies stored
Of Mortham's Indian wealth the hoard.
'Tis true, the aged servants said
Here his lamented wife is laid;
But weightier reasons may be guessed
For their lord's strict and stern behest,
That none should on his steps intrude,
Whene'er he sought this solitude.—
An ancient mariner I knew,
What time I sailed with Morgan's crew,
Who oft, 'mid our carousals, spake
Of Raleigh, Frobisher, and Drake;
Adventurous hearts! who bartered, bold,
Their English steel for Spanish gold.
Trust not, would his experience say,
Captain or comrade with your prey;
But seek some charnel, when at full,
The moon gilds skeleton and skull:
There dig, and tomb your precious heap,
And bid the dead your treasure keep;*
Sure stewards they, if fitting spell
Their service to the task compel.
Lacks there such charnel?—kill a slave,
Or prisoner, on the treasure-grave;
And bid his discontented ghost
Stalk nightly on his lonely post.—
Such was his tale. Its truth, I ween
Is in my morning vision seen."—

XIX.

Wilfrid, who scorned the legend wild,
In mingled mirth and pity smiled,
Much marvelling that a breast so bold
In such fond tale belief should hold;
But yet of Bertram sought to know
The apparition's form and show.—

* If time did not permit the buccaneers to lavish away their plunder in their usual debaucheries, they were wont to hide it, with many superstitious solemnities, in the desert islands and keys which they frequented, and where much treasure, whose lawless owners perished without reclaiming it, is still supposed to be concealed. The most cruel of mankind are often the most superstitious, and these pirates are said to have had recourse to a horrid ritual in order to secure an unearthly guardian to their treasures. They killed a negro or Spaniard, and buried him with the treasure, believing that his spirit would haunt the spot, and terrify away all intruders. I cannot produce any other authority on which this custom is ascribed to them than that of maritime tradition, which is, however, amply sufficient for the purpose of poetry.

The power within the guilty breast,
Oft vanquished, never quite suppressed,
That unsubdued and lurking lies,
To take the felon by surprise,*
And force him, as by magic spell,
In his despite his guilt to tell,—
That power in Bertram's breast awoke;
Scarce conscious he was heard, he spoke:
"'Twas Mortham's form, from foot to head!
His morion, with the plume of red,
His shape, his mien—'twas Mortham, right
As when I slew him in the fight."—
"Thou slay him?—thou?"—With conscious start
He heard, then manned his haughty heart.—
"I slew him?—I!—I had forgot
Thou, stripling, knewst not of the plot.
But it is spoken—nor will I
Deed done, or spoken word, deny.
I slew him; I! for thankless pride;—
'Twas by this hand that Mortham died."—

XX.

Wilfrid, of gentle hand and heart,
Averse to every active part,
But most averse to martial broil,
From danger shrunk, and turned from toil;
Yet the meek lover of the lyre
Nursed one brave spark of noble fire;
Against injustice, fraud, or wrong,
His blood beat high, his hand waxed strong.
Not his the nerves that could sustain
Unshaken, danger, toil, and pain;
But, when that spark blazed forth to flame,
He rose superior to his frame.
And now it came, that generous mood;
And, in full current of his blood,
On Bertram he laid desperate hand,
Placed firm his foot, and drew his brand.
"Should every fiend, to whom thou'rt sold,
Rise in thine aid, I keep my hold.—
Arouse there, ho! take spear and sword!
Attack the murderer of your Lord!"

XXI.

A moment fixed, as by a spell,
Stood Bertram—it seemed miracle,

* All who are conversant with the administration of criminal justice, must remember many occasions in which malefactors appear to have conducted themselves with a species of infatuation, either by making unnecessary confidences respecting their guilt, or by sudden and involuntary allusions to circumstances by which it could not fail to be exposed. A remarkable instance occurred in the celebrated case of Eugene Aram.

That one so feeble, soft, and tame,
Set grasp on warlike Risingham.
But when he felt a feeble stroke,
The fiend within the ruffian woke!
To wrench the sword from Wilfrid's hand,
To dash him headlong on the sand,
Was but one moment's work,—one more
Had drenched the blade in Wilfrid's gore;
But, in the instant it arose,
To end his life, his love, his woes,
A warlike Form, that marked the scene,
Presents his rapier sheathed between,
Parries the fast-descending blow,
And steps 'twixt Wilfrid and his foe;
Nor then unscabbarded his brand,
But, sternly pointing with his hand,
With monarch's voice forbade the fight,
And motioned Bertram from his sight.
"Go, and repent,"—he said, "while time
Is given thee; add not crime to crime."—

XXII.

Mute, and uncertain, and amazed,
As on a vision, Bertram gazed!
'Twas Mortham's bearing, bold and high,
His sinewy frame, his falcon eye,
His look and accent of command,
The martial gesture of his hand,
His stately form, spare-built and tall,
His war-bleached locks—'twas Mortham all.
Through Bertram's dizzy brain career
A thousand thoughts, and all of fear;
His wavering faith received not quite
The form he saw as Mortham's sprite,
But more he feared it, if it stood
His lord, in living flesh and blood.—
What spectre can the charnel send,
So dreadful as an injured friend?
Then, too, the habit of command,
Used by the leader of the band,
When Risingham, for many a day,
Had marched and fought beneath his sway,
Tamed him,—and with reverted face,
Backwards he bore his sullen pace,
Oft stopped, and oft on Mortham stared,
And dark as rated mastiff glared;
But when the tramp of steeds was heard,
Plunged in the glen, and disappeared.
Nor longer there the warrior stood,
Retiring eastward through the wood;
But first to Wilfrid warning gives,
"Tell thou to none that Mortham lives."—

XXIII.

Still rung these words in Wilfrid's ear,
Hinting he knew not what of fear,
When nearer came the coursers' tread,
And, with his father at their head,
Of horsemen armed a gallant power
Reined up their steeds before the tower.
"Whence these pale looks, my son?" he said:
"Where's Bertram? Why that naked blade?"—
Wilfrid ambiguously replied,
(For Mortham's charge his honour tied,)
"Bertram is gone—the villain's word
Avouched him murderer of his lord!
Even now we fought—but, when your tread
Announced you nigh, the felon fled."—
In Wycliffe's conscious eye appear
A guilty hope, a guilty fear;
On his pale brow the dew-drop broke,
And his lip quivered as he spoke:—

XXIV.

"A murderer!—Philip Mortham died
Amid the battle's wildest tide.
Wilfrid, or Bertram raves, or you!
Yet, grant such strange confession true,
Pursuit were vain—let him fly far—
Justice must sleep in civil war."—
A gallant youth rode near his side,
Brave Rokeby's page, in battle tried;
That morn, an embassy of weight
He brought to Barnard's castle gate,
And followed now in Wycliffe's train,
An answer for his lord to gain.
His steed, whose arched and sable neck
A hundred wreaths of foam bedeck,
Chafed not against the curb more high
Than he at Oswald's cold reply;
He bit his lip, implored his saint,
(His the old faith)—then burst restraint.

XXV.

"Yes! I beheld his bloody fall,
By that base traitor's dastard ball,
Just when I thought to measure sword,
Presumptuous hope! with Mortham's lord.
And shall the murderer 'scape, who slew
His leader generous, brave, and true?
Escape! while on the dew you trace
The marks of his gigantic pace?
No! ere the sun that dew shall dry,
False Risingham shall yield or die.—

Ring out the Castle 'larum bell!
Arouse the peasants with the knell!
Meantime, disperse—ride, gallants, ride!
Beset the wood on every side.
But if among you one there be,
That honours Mortham's memory,
Let him dismount and follow me!
Else on your crests sit fear and shame,
And foul suspicion dog your name!"—

XXVI.

Instant to earth young REDMOND sprung;
Instant on earth the harness rung
Of twenty men of Wycliffe's band,
Who waited not their lord's command.
Redmond his spurs from buskins drew,
His mantle from his shoulders threw,
His pistols in his belt he placed,
The green-wood gained, the footsteps traced,
Shouted like huntsman to his hounds,
"To cover, hark!"—and in he bounds.
Scarce heard was Oswald's anxious cry,
"Suspicion!—yes—pursue him—fly—
But venture not, in useless strife,
On ruffian desperate of his life.
Whoever finds him, shoot him dead!
Five hundred nobles for his head!"

XXVII.

The horsemen galloped to make good
Each path that issued from the wood.
Loud from the thickets rung the shout
Of Redmond and his eager rout;
With them was Wilfrid, stung with ire,
And envying Redmond's martial fire,
And emulous of fame.—But where
Is Oswald, noble Mortham's heir?
He, bound by honour, law, and faith,
Avenger of his kinsman's death?—
Leaning against the elmin tree;
With drooping head and slackened knee,
And clenchèd teeth, and close-clasped hands,
In agony of soul he stands!
His downcast eye on earth is bent,
His soul to every sound is lent;
For in each shout that cleaves the air,
May ring discovery and despair.

XXVIII.

What 'vailed it him, that brightly played
The morning sun on Mortham's glade?
All seems in giddy round to ride,
Like objects on a stormy tide,

Seen eddying by the moonlight dim,
Imperfectly to sink and swim.
What 'vailed it, that the fair domain,
Its battled mansion, hill and plain,
On which the sun so brightly shone,
Envied so long, was now his own?
The lowest dungeon, in that hour,
Of Brackenbury's dismal tower,*
Had been his choice, could such a doom
Have opened Mortham's bloody tomb!
Forced, too, to turn unwilling ear
To each surmise of hope or fear,
Murmured among the rustics round,
Who gathered at the 'larum sound,
He dared not turn his head away,
Even to look up to heaven to pray,
Or call on hell, in bitter mood,
For one sharp death-shot from the wood!

XXIX.

At length o'erpassed that dreadful space,
Back straggling came the scattered chase;
Jaded and weary, horse and man,
Returned the troopers, one by one.
Wilfrid, the last, arrived to say,
All trace was lost of Bertram's way,
Though Redmond still, up Brignal wood,
The hopeless quest in vain pursued.—
O, fatal doom of human race!
What tyrant passions passions chase!
Remorse from Oswald's brow is gone,
Avarice and pride resume their throne;
The pang of instant terror by,
They dictate thus, their slave's reply:

XXX.

"Ay—let him range like hasty hound!
And if the grim wolf's lair be found,
Small is my care how goes the game
With Redmond, or with Risingham,
Nay, answer not, thou simple boy!
Thy fair Matilda, all so coy
To thee, is of another mood
To that bold youth of Erin's blood.
Thy ditties will she freely praise,
And pay thy pains with courtly phrase;

* This tower has been already mentioned; it is situated near the north-eastern extremity of the wall which incloses Barnard Castle, and is traditionally said to have been the prison. By an odd coincidence it bears a name which we naturally connect with imprisonment, from its being that of Sir Robert Brackenbury, lieutenant of the TOWER of London under Edward IV. and Richard III.

In a rough path will oft command—
Accept at least—thy friendly hand;
His she avoids, or, urged and prayed,
Unwilling takes his proffered aid,
While conscious passion plainly speaks
In downcast look and blushing cheeks.
Whene'er he sings, will she glide nigh,
And all her soul is in her eye,
Yet doubts she still to tender free
The wonted words of courtesy.
These are strong signs!—yet wherefore sigh,
And wipe, effeminate, thine eye?
Thine shall she be, if thou attend
The counsels of thy sire and friend.

XXXI.

"Scarce wert thou gone, when peep of light
Brought genuine news of Marston's fight.
Brave Cromwell turned the doubtful tide,
And conquest blessed the rightful side;
Three thousand cavaliers lie dead,
Rupert and that bold Marquis fled;
Nobles and knights, so proud of late,
Must fine for freedom and estate.*
Of these, committed to my charge,
Is Rokeby, prisoner at large;
Redmond, his page, arrived to say
He reaches Barnard's towers to-day.
Right heavy shall his ransom be,
Unless that maid compound with thee!
Go to her now—be bold of cheer,
While her soul floats 'twixt hope and fear:
It is the very change of tide,
When best the female heart is tried—
Pride, prejudice, and modesty,
Are in the current swept to sea;
And the bold swain, who plies his oar,
May lightly row his bark to shore."

* After the battle of Marston Moor, the earl of Newcastle retired beyond sea in disgust, and many of his followers laid down their arms and made the best composition they could with the committees of parliament. Fines were imposed upon them in proportion to their estates and degrees of delinquency, and these fines were often bestowed upon such persons as had deserved well of the Commons. In some circumstances it happened that the oppressed cavaliers were fain to form family alliances with some powerful person among the triumphant party.

CANTO THIRD.

I.

THE hunting tribes of air and earth
Respect the brethren of their birth;
Nature, who loves the claim of kind,
Less cruel chase to each assigned.
The falcon, poised on soaring wing,
Watches the wild-duck by the spring;
The slow-hound wakes the fox's lair;
The greyhound presses on the hare;
The eagle pounces on the lamb;
The wolf devours the fleecy dam;
Ev'n tiger fell, and sullen bear,
Their likeness and their lineage spare.
Man, only, mars kind Nature's plan,
And turns the fierce pursuit on man;
Plying war's desultory trade,
Incursion, flight, and ambuscade,
Since Nimrod, Cush's mighty son,
At first the bloody game begun.

II.

The Indian,* prowling for his prey,
Who hears the settlers track his way,
And knows in distant forest far
Camp his red brethren of the war;
He, when each double and disguise
To baffle the pursuit he tries,
Low crouching now his head to hide,
Where swampy streams through rushes glide,
Now covering with the withered leaves
The foot-prints that the dew receives;
He, skilled in every sylvan guile,
Knows not, nor tries, such various wile,
As Risingham, when on the wind
Arose the loud pursuit behind.
In Redesdale his youth had heard†
Each art her wily dalesmen dared,

* The patience, abstinence, and ingenuity exerted by the North American Indians, when in pursuit of plunder or vengeance, is the most distinguished feature in their character; and the activity and address which they display in their retreat are equally surprising.

† The inhabitants of the valleys of Tyne and Reed were, in ancient times, so inordinately addicted to depredations, that in 1564 the Incorporated Merchant-adventurers of Newcastle made a law that none born in these districts should be admitted apprentice. The inhabitants are stated to be so generally addicted to rapine, that no faith should be reposed in those proceeding from "such lewde and wicked progenitors." This regulation continued to stand unre-

When Rooken-edge, and Redswair high,
To bugle rung and bloodhound's cry,
Announcing Jedwood-axe and spear,
And Lid'sdale riders in the rear;
And well his venturous life had proved
The lessons that his childhood loved.

III.

Oft had he shown, in climes afar,
Each attribute of roving war;
The sharpened ear, the piercing eye,
The quick resolve in danger nigh;
The speed, that in the flight or chase,
Outstripped the Charib's rapid race;
The steady brain, the sinewy limb,
To leap, to climb, to dive, to swim;
The iron frame, inured to bear
Each dire inclemency of air
Nor less confirmed to undergo
Fatigue's faint chill, and famine's throe.
These arts he proved, his life to save
In peril oft by land and wave,
On Arawaca's desert shore,
Or where La Plata's billows roar,
When oft the sons of vengeful Spain
Tracked the marauder's steps in vain.
These arts, in Indian warfare tried,
Must save him now by Greta's side.

IV.

'Twas then, in hour of utmost need,
He proved his courage, art, and speed.
Now slow he stalked with stealthy pace,
Now started forth in rapid race,
Oft doubling back in mazy train,
To blind the trace the dews retain;
Now clombe the rocks projecting high,
To baffle the pursuer's eye,
Now sought the stream, whose brawling sound
The echo of his footsteps drowned.
But if the forest verge he nears,
There trample steeds, and glimmer spears;

pealed until 1771. A beggar in an old play describes himself as "born in Redesdale in Northumberland, and come of a wight-riding surname, called the Robsons, good honest men and true, *saving a little shifting for their living, God help them*;"—a description which would have applied to most Borderers on both sides.

* Reidswair, famed for a skirmish to which it gives its name, is on the very edge of the Carter-Fell, which divides England from Scotland. The Rooken is a place upon Reed-water. Bertram being described as a native of these dales, where the habits of hostile depredation long survived the union of the crowns, may have been, in some degree, prepared by education for the exercise of a similar trade in the wars of the buccaneers.

If deeper down the copse he drew,
He heard the rangers' loud halloo,
Beating each cover while they came,
As if to start the sylvan game.
'Twas then,—like tiger close beset
At every pass with toil and net,
'Countered where'er he turns his glare,
By clashing arms and torches' flare,
Who meditates, with furious bound,
To burst on hunter, horse, and hound,—
'Twas then that Bertram's soul arose,
Prompting to rush upon his foes:
But as that crouching tiger, cowed
By brandished steel and shouting crowd,
Retreats beneath the jungle's shroud,
Bertram suspends his purpose stern,
And crouches in the brake and fern,
Hiding his face, lest foemen spy
The sparkle of his swarthy eye.

V.

Then Bertram might the bearing trace
Of the bold youth who led the chase,
Who paused to list for every sound,
Climbed every height to look around,
Then rushing on with naked sword,
Each dingle's bosky depths explored.
'Twas Redmond—by the azure eye;
'Twas Redmond—by the locks that fly
Disordered from his glowing cheek;
Mien, face, and form, young Redmond speak.
A form more active, light, and strong,
Ne'er shot the ranks of war along;
The modest, yet the manly mien,
Might grace the court of maiden queen.
A face more fair you well might find,
For Redmond's knew the sun and wind,
Nor boasted, from their tinge when free,
The charm of regularity;
But every feature had the power
To aid the expression of the hour:
Whether gay wit, and humour sly,
Danced laughing in his light-blue eye;
Or bended brow, and glance of fire,
And kindling cheek, spoke Erin's ire;
Or soft and saddened glances show
Her ready sympathy with woe;
Or in that wayward mood of mind,
When various feelings are combined,
When joy and sorrow mingle near,
And hope's bright wings are checked by fear,

And rising doubts keep transport down,
And anger lends a short-lived frown;
In that strange mood which maids approve,
Even when they dare not call it love;
With every change his features played,
As aspens show the light and shade.

VI.

Well Risingham young Redmond knew;
And much he marvelled that the crew,
Roused to revenge bold Mortham dead,
Were by that Mortham's foeman led;
For never felt his soul the woe,
That wails a generous foeman low,
Far less that sense of justice strong,
That wreaks a generous foeman's wrong.
But small his leisure now to pause;
Redmond is first, whate'er the cause:
And twice that Redmond came so near
Where Bertram couched like hunted deer,
The very boughs his steps displace,
Rustled against the ruffian's face,
Who, desperate, twice prepared to start,
And plunge his dagger in his heart!
But Redmond turned a different way,
And the bent boughs resumed their sway,
And Bertram held it wise, unseen,
Deeper to plunge in coppice green.
Thus, circled in his coil, the snake,
When roving hunters beat the brake,
Watches with red and glistening eye,
Prepared, if heedless step draw nigh,
With forkèd tongue and venomed fang,
Instant to dart the deadly pang;
But if the intruders turn aside,
Away his coils unfolded glide,
And through the deep savannah wind,
Some undisturbed retreat to find.

VII.

But Bertram, as he backward drew,
And heard the loud pursuit renew,
And Redmond's halloo on the wind,
Oft muttered in his savage mind—
"Redmond O'Neale! were thou and I
Alone this day's event to try,
With not a second here to see,
But the grey cliff and oaken tree,—
That voice of thine, that shouts so loud,
Should ne'er repeat its summons proud!
No! nor e'er try its melting power
Again in maiden's summer bower."—

Eluded, now behind him die,
Faint and more faint, each hostile cry;
He stands in Scargill wood alone,
Nor hears he now a harsher tone
Than the hoarse cushat's plaintive cry,
Or Greta's sound that murmurs by;
And on the dale, so lone and wild,
The summer sun in quiet smiled.

VIII.

He listened long with anxious heart,
Ear bent to hear, and foot to start,
And, while his stretched attention glows,
Refused his weary frame repose.
'Twas silence all—he laid him down,
Where purple heath profusely strown,
And throatwort with its azure bell,*
And moss and thyme his cushion swell.
There, spent with toil, he listless eyed
The course of Greta's playful tide;
Beneath, her banks now eddying dun,
Now brightly gleaming to the sun,
As, dancing over rock and stone,
In yellow light her currents shone,
Matching in hue the favourite gem
Of Albin's mountain-diadem.
Then, tired to watch the current's play,
He turned his weary eyes away,
To where the bank opposing showed
Its huge, square cliffs through shaggy wood.
One, prominent above the rest,
Reared to the sun its pale grey breast;
Around its broken summit grew
The hazel rude, and sable yew;
A thousand varied lichens dyed
Its waste and weather-beaten side,
And round its rugged basis lay,
By time or thunder rent away,
Fragments, that, from its frontlet torn,
Were mantled now by verdant thorn.
Such was the scene's wild majesty,
That filled stern Bertram's gazing eye.

IX.

In sullen mood he lay reclined,
Revolving, in his stormy mind,
The felon deed, the fruitless guilt,
His patron's blood by treason spilt;

* The CAMPANULA LATIFOLIA, *Grand Throatwort*, or *Canterbury Bells*, grows in profusion upon the beautiful banks of the river Greta, where it divides the manors of Brignal and Scargill about three miles above Greta-bridge.

A crime it seemed, so dire and dread,
That it had power to wake the dead.
Then, pondering on his life betrayed
By Oswald's art to Redmond's blade,
In treacherous purpose to withhold,
So seemed it, Mortham's promised gold
A deep and full revenge he vowed
On Redmond, forward, fierce, and proud;
Revenge on Wilfrid—on his sire
Redoubled vengeance, swift and dire!—
If, in such mood, (as legends say,
And well believed that simple day,)
The Enemy of Man has power
To profit by the evil hour,
Here stood a wretch, prepared to change
His soul's redemption for revenge!*
But though his vows, with such a fire
Of earnest and intense desire
For vengeance dark and fell, were made,
As well might reach hell's lowest shade,
No deeper clouds the grove embrowned,
No nether thunders shook the ground;
The demon knew his vassal's heart,
And spared temptation's needless art.

X.

Oft, mingled with the direful theme,
Came Mortham's form.—Was it a dream?
Or had he seen, in vision true,
That very Mortham whom he slew?
Or had in living flesh appeared
The only man on earth he feared?—
To try the mystic cause intent,
His eyes, that on the cliff were bent,
'Countered at once a dazzling glance,
Like sunbeam flashed from sword or lance.
At once he started as for fight,
But not a foeman was in sight;
He heard the cushat's murmur hoarse,
He heard the river's sounding course;
The solitary woodlands lay,
As slumbering in the summer ray.
He gazed, like lion roused, around,
Then sunk again upon the ground.
'Twas but, he thought, some fitful beam,
Glanced sudden from the sparkling stream;
Then plunged him in his gloomy train
Of ill-connected thoughts again,

* It is agreed by all writers upon magic and witchcraft that revenge was the most common motive for the pretended compact between Satan and his vassals.

Until a voice behind him cried,
"Bertram! well met on Greta side."—

XI.

Instant his sword was in his hand,
As instant sunk the ready brand;
Yet, dubious still, opposed he stood
To him that issued from the wood:—
"Guy Denzil!—is it thou?" he said;
"Do we two meet in Scargill shade?—
Stand back a space!—thy purpose show,
Whether thou comest as friend or foe.
Report hath said, that Denzil's name
From Rokeby's band was razed with shame."—
"A shame I owe that hot O'Neale,
Who told his knight, in peevish zeal,
Of my marauding on the clowns
Of Calverley and Bradford downs.*—
I reck not. In a war to strive,
Where, save the leaders, none can thrive,
Suits ill my mood; and better game
Awaits us both, if thou'rt the same
Unscrupulous, bold Risingham,
Who watched with me in midnight dark,
To snatch a deer from Rokeby-park.
How think'st thou?"—"Speak thy purpose out;
I love not mystery or doubt."—

XII.

"Then, list.—Not far there lurk a crew
Of trusty comrades stanch and true,
Gleaned from both factions—Roundheads, freed
From cant of sermon and of creed;
And Cavaliers, whose souls, like mine,
Spurn at the bonds of discipline.
Wiser, we judge, by dale and wold,
A warfare of our own to hold,
Than breathe our last on battle-down,
For cloak or surplice, mace or crown.
Our schemes are laid, our purpose set,
A chief and leader lack we yet.—
Thou art a wanderer, it is said;
For Mortham's death, thy steps waylaid,
Thy head at price—so say our spies,
Who range the valley in disguise.
Join then with us; though wild debate
And wrangling rend our infant state,

* The troops of the king, when they first took the field, were as well disciplined as could be expected from circumstances. But as the affairs of Charles became less favourable, and his funds for regularly paying his forces decreased, habits of military licence prevailed among them in greater excess.

Each, to an equal loath to bow,
Will yield to chief renowned as thou."—

XIII.

"Even now," thought Bertram, "passion-stirred,
I called on hell, and hell has heard!
What lack I, vengeance to command,*
But of stanch comrades such a band?
This Denzil, vowed to every evil,
Might read a lesson to the devil.
Well, be it so! each knave and fool
Shall serve as my revenge's tool."—
Aloud, "I take thy proffer, Guy,
But tell me where thy comrades lie?"—
"Not far from hence," Guy Denzil said;
"Descend, and cross the river's bed,
Where rises yonder cliff so grey."—
"Do thou," said Bertram, "lead the way."
Then muttered, "It is best make sure;
Guy Denzil's faith was never pure."—
He followed down the steep descent,
Then through the Greta's streams they went:
And, when they reached the farther shore,
They stood the lonely cliff before.

XIV.

With wonder Bertram heard within
The flinty rock a murmured din;
But when Guy pulled the wilding spray,
And brambles, from its base away,
He saw, appearing to the air,
A little entrance, low and square,
Like opening cell of hermit lone,
Dark, winding through the living stone.
Here entered Denzil, Bertram here;
And loud and louder on their ear,
As from the bowels of the earth,
Resounded shouts of boisterous mirth.
Of old, the cavern strait and rude,
In slaty rock the peasant hewed;
And Brignal's woods, and Scargill's wave,†
Ee'n now, o'er many a sister cave,

* First edition,—

"What lack I my revenge to quench,
But such a band of comrades stanch."

† The banks of the Greta, below Rutherford-bridge, abound in seams of a greyish slate, which are wrought in some places, to a very great depth under ground, thus forming artificial caverns, which, when the seam has been exhausted, are gradually hidden by the underwood which grows in profusion upon the romantic banks of the river. In times of public confusion, they might be well adapted to the purposes of banditti.

Where, far within the darksome rift,
The wedge and lever ply their thrift.
But war had silenced rural trade,
And the deserted mine was made
The banquet-hall and fortress too,
Of Denzil and his desperate crew.—
There Guilt his anxious revel kept;
There, on his sordid pallet, slept
Guilt-born Excess, the goblet drained
Still in his slumbering grasp retained;
Regret was there, his eye still cast
With vain repining on the past;
Among the feasters waited near
Sorrow, and unrepentant Fear,
And Blasphemy, to frenzy driven,
With his own crimes reproaching heaven,
While Bertram showed, amid the crew,
The Master-Fiend that Milton drew.

XV.

Hark! the loud revel wakes again,
To greet the leader of the train.
Behold the group by the pale lamp,
That struggles with the earthy damp.
By what strange features Vice has known,
To single out and mark her own!
Yet some there are, whose brows retain
Less deeply stamped her brand and stain.
See yon pale stripling! when a boy,
A mother's pride, a father's joy!
Now, 'gainst the vault's rude walls reclined,
An early image fills his mind:
The cottage, once his sire's, he sees,
Embowered upon the banks of Tees;
He views sweet Winston's woodland scene
And shares the dance on Gainford-green.
A tear is springing—but the zest
Of some wild tale, or brutal jest,
Hath to loud laughter stirred the rest.
On him they call, the aptest mate
For jovial song and merry feat;
Fast flies his dream—with dauntless air,
As one victorious o'er despair,
He bids the ruddy cup go round,
Till sense and sorrow both are drowned,
And soon, in merry wassail, he,
The life of all their revelry,
Peals his loud song!—The muse has found
Her blossoms on the wildest ground,
'Mid noxious weeds at random strewed,
Themselves all profitless and rude.—

With desperate merriment he sung,
The cavern to the chorus rung;
Yet mingled with his reckless glee
Remorse's bitter agony.

XVI.

SONG.

O, Brignal banks are wild and fair,
And Greta woods are green,
And you may gather garlands there,
Would grace a summer queen.
And as I rode by Dalton-hall,
Beneath the turrets high,
A Maiden on the castle wall
Was singing merrily,—

Chorus.

"O, Brignal banks are fresh and fair,
And Greta woods are green,
I'd rather rove with Edmund there,
Than reign our English queen."

"If, Maiden, thou wouldst wend with me,
To leave both tower and town,
Thou first must guess what life lead we,
That dwell by dale and down:
And if thou canst that riddle read,
As read full well you may,
Then to the greenwood shalt thou speed,
As blithe as Queen of May."

Chorus.

Yet sung she, "Brignal banks are fair,
And Greta woods are green;
I'd rather rove with Edmund there,
Than reign our English queen.

XVII.

"I read you, by your bugle-horn,
And by your palfrey good,
I read you for a ranger sworn,
To keep the king's greenwood."—
"A ranger, lady, winds his horn,
And 'tis at peep of light;
His blast is heard at merry morn,
And mine at dead of night."—

Chorus.

Yet sung she, "Brignal banks are fair,
And Greta woods are gay;
I would I were with Edmund there,
To reign his Queen of May!

"With burnished brand and musketoon,
So gallantly you come,
I read you for a bold dragoon,
That lists the tuck of drum."—
"I list no more the tuck of drum,
No more the trumpet hear;
But when the beetle sounds his hum,
My comrades take the spear.

Chorus.

"And, O! though Brignal banks be fair,
And Greta woods be gay,
Yet mickle must the maiden dare,
Would reign my Queen of May!

XVIII.

"Maiden! a nameless life I lead,
A nameless death I'll die;
The fiend, whose lantern lights, the mead,
Were better mate than I!
And when I'm with my comrades met,
Beneath the greenwood bough,
What once we were we all forget,
Nor think what we are now.

Chorus.

"Yet Brignal banks are fresh and fair,
And Greta woods are green,
And you may gather garlands there
Would grace a summer queen."—

When Edmund ceased his simple song,
Was silence on the sullen throng,
Till waked some ruder mate their glee
With note of coarser minstrelsy.
But, far apart, in dark divan,
Denzil and Bertram many a plan,
Of import foul and fierce, designed,
While still on Bertram's grasping mind
The wealth of murdered Mortham hung;
Though half he feared his daring tongue,
When it should give his wishes birth,
Might raise a spectre from the earth!

XIX.

At length his wondrous tale he told:
When, scornful, smiled his comrade bold;
For, trained in licence of a court,
Religion's self was Denzil's sport:
Then judge in what contempt he held,
The visionary tales of eld!

His awe for Bertram scarce repressed
The unbeliever's sneering jest.
"'Twere hard," he said, "for sage or seer
To spell the subject of your fear;
Nor do I boast the art renowned,
Vision and omen to expound.
Yet, faith if I must needs afford
To spectre watching treasured hoard,
As ban-dog keeps his master's roof,
Bidding the plunderer stand aloof,
This doubt remains—thy goblin gaunt
Hath chosen ill his ghostly haunt;
For why his guard on Mortham hold,
When Rokeby castle hath the gold
Thy patron won on Indian soil,
By stealth, by piracy, and spoil?"—

XX.

At this he paused—for angry shame
Lowered on the brow of Risingham.
He blushed to think, that he should seem
Assertor of an airy dream,
And gave his wrath another theme.
"Denzil," he says, "though lowly laid,
Wrong not the memory of the dead,
For, while he lived, at Mortham's look
Thy very soul, Guy Denzil, shook!
And when he taxed thy breach of word
To yon fair Rose of Allenford,
I saw thee crouch like chastened hound,
Whose back the huntsman's lash hath found.
Nor dare to call his foreign wealth
The spoil of piracy or stealth;
He won it bravely with his brand,
When Spain waged warfare with our land.*
Mark, too,—I brook no idle jeer,
Nor couple Bertram's name with fear;
Mine is but half the demon's lot,
For I believe, but tremble not,—
Enough of this.—Say, why this hoard
Thou deem'st at Rokeby castle stored;
Or think'st that Mortham would bestow
His treasure with his faction's foe?"—

*There was a short war with Spain in 1625-6, which will be found to agree pretty well with the chronology of the poem. But probably Bertram held an opinion, very common among the maritime heroes of the age, that "there was no peace beyond the Line." The Spanish *guarda-costas* were constantly employed in aggressions upon the trade and settlements of the English and French, and by their own severities gave room for the system of buccaneering, at first adopted in self-defence and retaliation, and afterwards persevered in from habit and a thirst of plunder.

XXI.

Soon quenched was Denzil's ill-timed mirth;
Rather he would have seen the earth
Give to ten thousand spectres birth,
Than venture to awake to flame
The deadly wrath of Risingham.
Submiss he answered,—"Mortham's mind,
Thou know'st, to joy was ill inclined.
In youth, 'tis said, a gallant free,
A lusty reveller was he;
But since returned from over sea,
A sullen and a silent mood
Hath numbed the current of his blood.
Hence he refused each kindly call
To Rokeby's hospitable hall,
And our stout Knight, at dawn of morn
Who loved to hear the bugle-horn,
Nor less, when eve his oaks embrowned,
To see the ruddy cup go round,
Took umbrage that a friend so near
Refused to share his chase and cheer;
Thus did the kindred barons jar,
Ere they divided in the war.
Yet, trust me, friend, Matilda fair
Of Mortham's wealth is destined heir."—

XXII.

"Destined to her! to yon slight maid!
The prize my life had well nigh paid,
When 'gainst Laroche, by Cayo's wave
I fought, my patron's wealth to save!—
Denzil, I knew him long, but ne'er
Knew him that joyous cavalier,
Whom youthful friends and early fame
Called soul of gallantry and game.
A moody man, he sought our crew,
Desperate and dark, whom no one knew;
And rose, as men with us must rise,
By scorning life and all its ties.
On each adventure rash he roved,
As danger for itself he loved;
On his sad brow nor mirth nor wine
Could e'er one wrinkled knot untwine;
Ill was the omen if he smiled,
For 'twas in peril stern and wild;
But when he laughed, each luckless mate
Might hold our fortune desperate.
Foremost he fought in every broil,
Then scornful turned him from the spoil;
Nay, often strove to bar the way
Between his comrades and their prey;

Preaching, e'en then, to such as we,
Hot with our dear-bought victory,
Of mercy and humanity!

XXIII.

"I loved him well—His fearless part,
His gallant leading, won my heart.
And after each victorious fight,
'Twas I that wrangled for his right,
Redeemed his portion of the prey
That greedier mates had torn away:
In field and storm thrice saved his life,
And once amid our comrades' strife.*—
Yes, I have loved thee! Well hath proved
My toil, my danger, how I loved!
Yet will I mourn no more thy fate,
Ingrate in life, in death ingrate.
Rise if thou canst!" he looked around,
And sternly stamped upon the ground—
"Rise, with thy bearing proud and high,
E'en as this morn it met mine eye,
And give me, if thou darest, the lie!"
He paused—then, calm and passion-freed,
Bade Denzil with his tale proceed.

XXIV.

"Bertram, to thee I need not tell,
What thou hast cause to wot so well,
How Superstition's nets were twined
Around the Lord of Mortham's mind;
But since he drove thee from his tower,
A maid he found in Greta's bower,
Whose speech, like David's harp, had sway
To charm his evil fiend away.
I know not if her features moved
Remembrance of the wife he loved;
But he would gaze upon her eye,
Till his mood softened to a sigh.
He, whom no living mortal sought
To question of his secret thought,
Now every thought and care confessed
To his fair niece's faithful breast;
Nor was there aught of rich and rare,
In earth, in ocean, or in air,
But it must deck Matilda's hair.
Her love still bound him unto life;
But then awoke the civil strife,
And menials bore, by his commands,
Three coffers, with their iron bands,

* The laws of the buccaneers, and their successors, the pirates, however severe and equitable, were like other laws, often set aside by the stronger party. Their quarrels about the division of the spoil fill their history, and they as frequently arose out of mere frolic, or the tyrannical humour of their chiefs.

From Mortham's vault, at midnight deep,
To her lone bower in Rokeby-Keep,
Ponderous with gold and plate of pride—
His gift, if he in battle died."—

XXV.

"Then Denzil, as I guess, lays train,
These iron-banded chests to gain;
Else, wherefore should he hover here,
Where many a peril waits him near,
For all his feats of war and peace,
For plundered boors, and hearts of greece?*
Since through the hamlets as he fared,
What hearth has Guy's marauding spared,
Or where the chase that hath not rung
With Denzil's bow, at midnight strung?"—
"I hold my wont—my rangers go
E'en now to track a milk-white doe.
By Rokeby-hall she takes her lair,
In Greta wood she harbours fair,
And when my huntsman marks her way,
What think'st thou, Bertram, of the prey?
Were Rokeby's daughter in our power,
We rate her ransom at her dower."—

XXVI.

"'Tis well!—there's vengeance in the thought
Matilda is by Wilfrid sought;
And hot-brained Redmond, too, 'tis said,
Pays lover's homage to the maid.
Bertram she scorned—if met by chance,
She turned from me her shuddering glance,
Like a nice dame, that will not brook
On what she hates and loathes to look;
She told to Mortham she could ne'er
Behold me without secret fear,
Foreboding evil:—she may rue
To find her prophecy fall true!—
The war has weeded Rokeby's train,
Few followers in his halls remain;
If thy schemes miss, then, brief and bold,
We are enow to storm the hold,
Bear off the plunder, and the dame,
And leave the castle all in flame."—

XXVII.

"Still art thou Valour's venturous son!
Yet ponder first the risk to run:
The menials of the castle, true,
And stubborn to their charge, though few
The wall to scale—the moat to cross—
The wicket-grate—the inner fosse"——

* Deer in season.

"Fool! if we blench for toys like these,
On what fair guerdon can we seize?
Our hardiest venture, to explore
Some wretched peasant's fenceless door,
And the best prize we bear away,
The earnings of his sordid day."—
"A while thy hasty taunt forbear:
In sight of road more sure and fair,
Thou wouldst not choose, in blindfold wrath,
Or wantonness, a desperate path?
List, then;—for vantage or assault,
From gilded vane to dungeon vault,
Each pass of Rokeby-house I know:
There is one postern, dark and low,
That issues at a secret spot,
By most neglected or forgot.
Now, could a spial of our train
On fair pretext admittance gain,
That sally-port might be unbarred:
Then, vain were battlement and ward!"—

XXVIII.

"Now speak'st thou well:—to me the same,
If force or art shall urge the game;
Indifferent, if like fox I wind,
Or spring like tiger on the hind.—
But, hark! our merry men so gay
Troll forth another roundelay."—

SONG.

"A weary lot is thine, fair maid,
A weary lot is thine!
To pull the thorn thy brow to braid,
And press the rue for wine!
A lightsome eye, a soldier's mien,
A feather of the blue,
A doublet of the Lincoln green,—
No more of me you knew,
My love!
No more of me you knew.

"This morn is merry June, I trow,
The rose is budding fain;
But she shall bloom in winter snow,
Ere we two meet again."
He turned his charger as he spake,
Upon the river shore,
He gave his bridle-reins a shake,
Said, "Adieu for evermore,
My love!
And adieu for evermore."*—

* The last verse of this song is taken from the fragment of an old Scottish ballad, of which I have only heard the following verses,

XXIX.

"What youth is this, your band among,
The best for minstrelsy and song?
In his wild notes seem aptly met
A strain of pleasure and regret."
"Edmund of Winston is his name;
The hamlet sounded with the fame
Of early hopes his childhood gave,—
Now centred all in Brignal cave!
I watch him well—his wayward course
Shows oft a tincture of remorse.
Some early love-shaft grazed his heart,
And oft the scar will ache and smart.
Yet is he useful;—of the rest,
By fits, the darling and the jest,
His harp, his story, and his lay
Oft aid the idle hours away:
When unemployed, each fiery mate
Is ripe for mutinous debate.
He tuned his strings e'en now—again
He wakes them, with a blither strain.

XXX.

SONG.

ALLEN-A-DALE.

Allen-a-Dale has no faggot for burning,
Allen-a-Dale has no furrow for turning,
Allen-a-Dale has no fleece for the spinning,
Yet Allen-a-Dale has red gold for the winning.
Come, read me my riddle! come, hearken my tale!
And tell me the craft of bold Allen-a-Dale.

The Baron of Ravensworth* prances in pride,
And he views his domains upon Arkindale side.

relating perhaps to some of the followers of James II., who joined him in Ireland previous to the battle of the Boyne:—

It was all for my rightful king
I left my native strand,
It was all for my rightful king
I e'er saw Irish land.
* * * *
The trooper turned him round about
Upon the Irish shore,
He gave his bridle-reins a shake,
Said, "Adieu for evermore,
My love!
And adieu for evermore."

* The ruins of Ravensworth Castle stand in the North Riding of Yorkshire, about three miles from the town of Richmond, and adjoining to the waste called the Forest of Arkingarth. It belonged originally to the powerful family of Fitzhugh, from whom it passed to the Lords Dacre of the South.

The mere for his net, and the land for his game,
The chase for the wild, and the park for the tame;
Yet the fish of the lake, and the deer of the vale,
Are less free to Lord Dacre than Allen-a-Dale!

Allen-a-Dale was ne'er belted a knight,
Though his spur be as sharp, and his blade be as bright,
Allen-a-Dale is no baron or lord,
Yet twenty tall yeomen will draw at his word;
And the best of our nobles his bonnet will vail,
Who at Rere-cross on Stanmore* meets Allen-a-Dale.

Allen-a-Dale to his wooing is come;
The mother, she asked of his household and home:
"Though the castle of Richmond stand fair on the hill,
My hall," quoth bold Allen, "shows gallanter still;
'Tis the blue vault of heaven, with its crescent so pale,
And with all its bright spangles!" said Allen-a-Dale.

The father was steel, the mother was stone;
They lifted the latch, and they bade him be gone;
But loud, on the morrow, their wail and their cry:
He had laughed on the lass with his bonny black eye,
And she fled to the forest to hear a love-tale,
And the youth it was told by was Allen-a-Dale!

XXXI.

"Thou seest that, whether sad or gay,
Love mingles ever in his lay.
But when his boyish wayward fit
Is o'er, he hath address and wit;
O! 'tis a brain of fire, can ape
Each dialect, each various shape."—
"Nay, then, to aid thy project, Guy—
Soft! who comes here?"—"My trusty spy.
Speak, Hamlin! hast thou lodged our deer?"†
"I have—but two fair stags are near.
I watched her as she slowly strayed
From Eglistone up Thorsgill glade;
But Wilfrid Wycliffe sought her side,
And then young Redmond, in his pride,
Shot down to meet them on their way:
Much, as it seemed, was theirs to say:

* This is the fragment of an old cross with its pediment, surrounded by an intrenchment, upon the very summit of the waste ridge of Stanmore, near a small house of entertainment, called the Spittal. It is called Rere-cross, or Ree-cross. Its situation, and the pains taken to defend it, seem to indicate that it was intended for a landmark of importance.

† The duty of the ranger or pricker, was first to lodge, or harbour, the deer, *i. e.* to discover his retreat, and then to make his report to his prince or master.

There's time to pitch both toil and net,
Before their path be homeward set."—
A hurried and a whispered speech
Did Bertram's will to Denzil teach,
Who, turning to the robber band,
Bade four, the bravest, take the brand.

CANTO FOURTH.

I.

When Denmark's Raven soared on high,
Triumphant through Northumbrian sky,
Till, hovering near, her fatal croak
Bade Reged's Britons dread the yoke,*
And the broad shadow of her wing
Blackened each cataract and spring,
Where Tees in tumult leaves his source,†
Thundering o'er Caldron and High-Force:
Beneath the shade the Northmen came,
Fixed on each vale a Runic name,‡

*About the year 866, the Danes, under their celebrated leaders Inguar (more properly Agnar) and Hubba, sons, it is said, of the still more celebrated Regnar Lodbrog, invaded Northumberland, bringing with them the magical standard, so often mentioned in poetry, called Reafen, or Raunfan, from its bearing the figure of a Raven.

The Danes renewed and extended their incursions, and began to colonize, establishing a kind of capital at York, from which they spread their conquests and incursions in every direction. Stanmore, which divides the mountains of Westmoreland and Cumberland, was probably the boundary of the Danish kingdom in that direction. The district to the west, known in ancient British history by the name of Reged, had never been conquered by the Saxons, and continued to maintain a precarious independence until it was ceded to Malcolm, king of Scots, by William the Conqueror, probably on account of its similarity in language and manners to the neighbouring British kingdom of Strath Clyde.

† The Tees rises about the skirts of Crossfell, and falls over the cataracts named in the text before it leaves the mountains which divide the North Riding from Cumberland. High-Force is seventy-five feet in height.

‡ The heathen Danes have left several traces of their religion in the upper part of Teesdale. Balder-garth, which derives its name from the unfortunate son of Odin, is a tract of waste land on the very ridge of Stanmore; and a brook, which falls into the Tees near Barnard Castle, is named after the same deity. A field upon the banks of the Tees is also termed Woden-Croft, from the supreme deity of the Edda. Thorsgill, of which a description is attempted in stanza ii., is a beautiful little brook and dell, running up behind the ruins of Eglistone Abbey. Thor was the Hercules of the Scandinavian mythology, a dreaded giant-queller, and in that capacity the champion of the gods and the defender of Asgard, the northern Olympus, against the frequent attacks of the inhabitants of Jotunheim.

Reared high their altars' rugged stone,
And gave their Gods the land they won.
Then, Balder, one bleak garth was thine,
And one sweet brooklet's silver line,
And Woden's Croft did title gain
From the stern Father of the Slain; *
But to the Monarch of the Mace,
That held in fight the foremost place,
To Odin's son, and Sifia's spouse,
Near Stratforth high they paid their vows,
Remembered Thor's victorious fame,
And gave the dell the Thunderer's name.

II.

Yet Scald or Kemper erred, I ween,
Who gave that soft and quiet scene,
With all its varied light and shade,
And every little sunny glade,
And the blithe brook that strolls along
Its pebbled bed with summer song,
To the grim God of blood and scar,
The grisly King of Northern War.
O, better were its banks assigned
To spirits of a gentler kind!
For where the thicket-groups recede,
And the rathe† primrose decks the mead,
The velvet grass seems carpet meet
For the light fairies' lively feet.
Yon tufted knoll, with daisies strown
Might make proud Oberon a throne,
While, hidden in the thicket nigh,
Puck should brood o'er his frolic sly;
And where profuse the wood-veitch clings
Round ash and elm, in verdant rings,
Its pale and azure-pencilled flower
Should canopy Titania's bower.

III.

Here rise no cliffs the vale to shade,
But, skirting every sunny glade,
In fair variety of green
The woodland lends its sylvan screen.
Hoary, yet haughty, frowns the oak,
Its boughs by weight of ages broke;
And towers erect, in sable spire,
The pine-tree scathed by lightning-fire;
The drooping ash and birch, between,
Hang their fair tresses o'er the green,
And all beneath, at random grow
Each coppice dwarf of varied show,

* These two lines are not found in the First Edition. † Early.

Or, round the stems profusely twined,
Fling summer odours on the wind.
Such varied group Urbino's hand
Round Him of Tarsus nobly planned,
What time he bade proud Athens own
On Mars's Mount the God Unknown!
Then grey Philosophy stood nigh,
Though bent by age, in spirit high:
There rose the scar-seamed Veteran's spear,
There Grecian Beauty bent to hear,
While Childhood at her foot was placed,
Or clung delighted to her waist.

IV.

"And rest we here," Matilda said,
And sate her in the varying shade.
"Chance-met, we well may steal an hour
To friendship due from fortune's power.
Thou, Wilfrid, ever kind, must lend
Thy counsel to thy sister-friend;
And, Redmond, thou, at my behest,
No farther urge thy desperate quest.
For to my care a charge is left,
Dangerous to one of aid bereft,
Well nigh an orphan, and alone,
Captive her sire, her house o'erthrown."—
Wilfrid, with wonted kindness graced,
Beside her on the turf she placed,
Then paused, with downcast look and eye,
Nor bade young Redmond seat him nigh,
Her conscious diffidence he saw,
Drew backward as in modest awe,
And sat a little space removed,
Unmarked to gaze on her he loved.

V.

Wreathed in its dark-brown rings, her hair
Half hid Matilda's forehead fair,
Half hid and half revealed to view
Her full dark eye of hazel hue.
The rose, with faint and feeble streak,
So slightly tinged the maiden's cheek,
That you had said her hue was pale,
But if she faced the summer gale,
Or spoke, or sung, or quicker moved,
Or heard the praise of those she loved,
Or when of interest was expressed
Aught that waked feeling in her breast,
The mantling blood in ready play
Rivalled the blush of rising day.
There was a soft and pensive grace,
A cast of thought upon her face,

That suited well the forehead high,
The eye-lash dark, and downcast eye;
The mild expression spoke a mind
In duty firm, composed, resigned;—
'Tis that which Roman art has given,
To mark their maiden Queen of Heaven.
In hours of sport, that mood gave way
To Fancy's light and frolic play;
And when the dance, or tale, or song,
In harmless mirth sped time along,
Full oft her doating sire would call
His Maud the merriest of them all.
But days of war, and civil crime,
Allowed but ill such festal time,
And her soft pensiveness of brow
Had deepened into sadness now.
In Marston field her father ta'en,
Her friends dispersed, brave Mortham slain,
While every ill her soul foretold,
From Oswald's thirst of power and gold,
And boding thoughts that she must part
With a soft vision of her heart,—
All lowered around the lovely maid,
To darken her dejection's shade.

VI.

Who has not heard—while Erin yet
Strove 'gainst the Saxon's iron bit—
Who has not heard how brave O'Neale*
In English blood imbrued his steel,
Against St. George's cross blazed high
The banners of his Tanistry,

* The O'Neale here meant, for more than one succeeded to the chieftainship during the reign of Elizabeth, was Hugh, the grandson of Con O'Neale, called Con-Bacco, or the Lame. His father, Matthew O'Kelly, was illegitimate, and, being the son of a blacksmith's wife, was usually called Matthew the Blacksmith. His father, nevertheless, destined his succession to him; and he was created, by Elizabeth, baron of Dungannon. Upon the death of Con-Bacco, this Matthew was slain by his brother. Hugh narrowly escaped the same fate, and was protected by the English. Shane O'Neale, his uncle, called Shane-Dymas, was succeeded by Turlough Lynogh O'Neale, after whose death, Hugh, having assumed the chieftainship, became nearly as formidable to the English as any by whom it had been possessed. He rebelled repeatedly, and as often made submissions, of which it was usually a condition that he should not any longer assume the title of O'Neale; in lieu of which he was created earl of Tyrone. But this condition he never observed longer than until the pressure of superior force was withdrawn. His baffling the gallant earl of Essex in the field, and over-reaching him in treaty, was the induction to that nobleman's tragedy. Lord Mountjoy succeeded in finally subjugating O'Neale; but it was not till the succession of James, to whom he made personal submission, and was received with civility at court.

To fiery Essex gave the foil,
And reigned a prince on Ulster's soil?
But chief arose his victor pride,
When that brave Marshal fought and died,*
And Avon-Duff to ocean bore
His billows red with Saxon gore.
'Twas first in that disastrous fight,
Rokeby and Mortham proved their might.
There had they fallen amongst the rest,
But pity touched a chieftain's breast;
The Tanist he to great O'Neale,†
He checked his followers' bloody zeal,
To quarter took the kinsmen bold,
And bore them to his mountain-hold,
Gave them each sylvan joy to know,
Slieve-Donard's cliffs and woods could show,
Shared with them Erin's festal cheer,
Showed them the chase of wolf and deer
And, when a fitting time was come,
Safe and unransomed sent them home,
Loaded with many a gift, to prove
A generous foe's respect and love.

VII.

Years speed away. On Rokeby's head
Some touch of early snow was shed;
Calm he enjoyed, by Greta's wave,
The peace which James the Peaceful gave,
While Mortham, far beyond the main,
Waged his fierce wars on Indian Spain.—
It chanced upon a wintry night,
That whitened Stanmore's stormy height,
The chase was o'er, the stag was killed,
In Rokeby hall the cups were filled,
And by the huge stone chimney sate
The Knight in hospitable state.
Moonless the sky, the hour was late,
When a loud summons shook the gate,
And sore for entrance and for aid
A voice of foreign accent prayed.
The porter answered to the call,
And instant rushed into the hall
A Man, whose aspect and attire
Startled the circle by the fire.

*The chief victory which Tyrone obtained over the English was in a battle fought near Blackwater, while he besieged a fort garrisoned by the English, which commanded the passes into his country. The river called by the English Blackwater, is termed in Irish, Avon-Duff, which has the same signification.

†This refers to a custom peculiar to the Irish. The Tanist of O'Neale was the heir-apparent of his power.

VIII.

His plaited hair in elf-locks* spread
Around his bare and matted head;
On leg and thigh, close-stretched and trim
His vesture showed the sinewy limb;
In saffron dyed, a linen vest
Was frequent folded round his breast;
A mantle long and loose he wore,
Shaggy with ice, and stained with gore,
He clasped a burden to his heart,
And, resting on a knotted dart,
The snow from hair and beard he shook,
And round him gazed with wildered look:
Then up the hall, with staggering pace
He hastened by the blaze to place,
Half lifeless from the bitter air,
His load, a Boy of beauty rare.
To Rokeby, next, he louted† low,
Then stood erect his tale to show,
With wild majestic port and tone,‡
Like envoy of some barbarous throne.
"Sir Richard, Lord of Rokeby, hear!
Turlough O'Neale salutes thee dear;
He graces thee, and to thy care
Young Redmond gives, his grandson fair.
He bids thee breed him as thy son,
For Turlough's days of joy are done;
And other lords have seized his land,
And faint and feeble is his hand;
And all the glory of Tyrone
Is like a morning vapour flown.
To bind the duty on thy soul,
He bids thee think on Erin's bowl!
If any wrong the young O'Neale,
He bids thee think of Erin's steel.
To Mortham first this charge was due,
But, in his absence, honours you.—
Now is my master's message by,
And Ferraught will contented die."—

IX.

His look grew fixed, his cheek grew pale,
He sunk when he had told his tale;
For, hid beneath his mantle wide,
A mortal wound was in his side.
Vain was all aid—in terror wild,
And sorrow, screamed the orphan child.

*This is an attempt to describe the ancient Irish dress, which was very similar to that worn by the Scottish Highlanders. †Bowed.
‡The Irish chiefs, in their intercourse with the English, and with each other, were wont to assume the language and style of independent royalty.

Poor Ferraught raised his wistful eyes,
And faintly strove to soothe his cries;
All reckless of his dying pain,
He blessed and blessed him o'er again!
And kissed the little hands outspread,
And kissed and crossed the infant head,
And, in his native tongue and phrase,
Prayed to each saint to watch his days;
Then all his strength together drew,
The charge to Rokeby to renew.
When half was faltered from his breast,
And half by dying signs expressed,
"Bless thee, O'Neale!" he faintly said,
And thus the faithful spirit fled.

X.

'Twas long ere soothing might prevail
Upon the child to end the tale:
And then he said, that from his home
His grandsire had been forced to roam,
Which had not been if Redmond's hand
Had but had strength to draw the brand,
The brand of Lenaugh More the Red,
That hung beside the grey wolf's head.—
'Twas from his broken phrase descried,
His foster-father* was his guide,
Who, in his charge, from Ulster bore
Letters, and gifts a goodly store;
But ruffians met them in the wood.
Ferraught in battle boldly stood,
Till wounded and o'erpowered at length,
And stripped of all, his failing strength
Just bore him here—and then the child
Renewed again his moaning wild.

XI.

The tear, down Childhood's cheek that flows,
Is like the dew-drop on the rose;
When next the summer breeze comes by,
And waves the bush, the flower is dry.
Won by their care, the orphan child
Soon on his new protector smiled,
With dimpled cheek and eye so fair,
Through his thick curls of flaxen hair.
But blithest laughed that cheek and eye,
When Rokeby's little maid was nigh;
'Twas his, with elder brother's pride,
Matilda's tottering steps to guide;

* There was no tie more sacred among the Irish than that which connected the foster-father, as well as the nurse herself, with the child they brought up.

His native lays in Irish tongue,
To soothe her infant ear he sung,
And primrose twined with daisy fair,
To form a chaplet for her hair.
By lawn, by grove, by brooklet's strand,
The children still were hand in hand,
And good Sir Richard smiling eyed
The early knot so kindly tied.

XII.

But summer months bring wilding shoot
From bud to bloom, from bloom to fruit;
And years draw on our human span,
From child to boy, from boy to man;
And soon in Rokeby's woods is seen
A gallant boy in hunter's green.
He loves to wake the felon boar,
In his dark haunt on Greta's shore,
And loves, against the deer so dun,
To draw the shaft, or lift the gun:
Yet more he loves, in autumn prime,
The hazel's spreading boughs to climb,
And down its clustered stores to hail
Where young Matilda holds her veil.
And she, whose veil receives the shower,
Is altered too, and knows her power;
Assumes a monitress's pride,
Her Redmond's dangerous sports to chide.
Yet listens still to hear him tell
How the grim wild-boar fought and fell,
How at his fall the bugle rung,
Till rock and greenwood answer flung;
Then blesses her, that man can find
A pastime of such savage kind!

XIII.

But Redmond knew to weave his tale
So well with praise of wood and dale,
And knew so well each point to trace,
Gives living interest to the chase,
And knew so well o'er all to throw
His spirit's wild romantic glow,
That, while she blamed, and while she feared,
She loved each venturous tale she heard.
Oft, too, when drifted snow and rain
To bower and hall their steps restrain,
Together they explored the page
Of glowing bard or gifted sage;
Oft, placed the evening fire beside,
The minstrel art alternate tried,
While gladsome harp and lively lay
Bade winter night flit fast away:

Thus from their childhood blending still
Their sport, their study, and their skill,
An union of the soul they prove,
But must not think that it was love.
But though they dared not, envious Fame
Soon dared to give that union name:
And when so often, side by side,
From year to year the pair she eyed,
She sometimes blamed the good old Knight
As dull of ear and dim of sight,
Sometimes his purpose would declare,
That young O'Neale should wed his heir.

XIV.

The suit of Wilfrid rent disguise
And bandage from the lovers' eyes;
'Twas plain that Oswald, for his son,
Had Rokeby's favour well-nigh won.
Now must they meet with change of cheer,
With mutual looks of shame and fear;
Now must Matilda stray apart,
To school her disobedient heart;
And Redmond now alone must rue
The love he never can subdue.
But factions rose, and Rokeby sware,
No rebel's son should wed his heir;
And Redmond, nurtured while a child
In many a bard's traditions wild,
Now sought the lonely wood or stream
To cherish there a happier dream,
Of maiden won by sword or lance,
As in the regions of romance;
And count the heroes of his line,
Great Nial* of the Pledges Nine,
Shane-Dymas† wild, and Geraldine,‡
And Connan-More, who vowed his race
For ever to the fight and chase,
And cursed him, of his lineage born,
Should sheathe the sword to reap the corn,

* Niell Naighvallach, or Of the Nine Hostages, is said to have been monarch of all Ireland, during the end of the fourth, or the beginning of the fifth century.

† This Shane-Dymas, or John the Wanton, held the title and power of O'Neale in the earlier part of Elizabeth's reign, against whom he rebelled repeatedly.

‡ The O'Neales were closely allied with this powerful and warlike family; for Henry Owen O'Neale married the daughter of Thomas earl of Kildare, and their son, Con-More, married his cousin-german, a daughter of Gerald earl of Kildare. This Con-More cursed any of his posterity who should learn the English language, sow corn, or build houses, so as to invite the English to settle in their country. Others ascribe this anathema to his son Con-Bacco.

Or leave the mountain and the wold,
To shroud himself in castle hold.
From such examples hope he drew,
And brightened as the trumpet blew.

XV.

If brides were won by heart and blade,
Redmond had both his cause to aid,
And all beside of nurture rare
That might beseem a baron's heir.
Turlough O'Neale, in Erin's strife,
On Rokeby's Lord bestowed his life,
And well did Rokeby's generous knight
Young Redmond for the deed requite.
Nor was his liberal care and cost
Upon the gallant stripling lost:
Seek the North Riding broad and wide,
Like Redmond none could steed bestride;
From Tynemouth search to Cumberland,
Like Redmond none could wield a brand;
And then, of humour kind and frée,
And bearing him to each degree
With frank and fearless courtesy,
There never youth was formed to steal
Upon the heart like brave O'Neale.

XVI.

Sir Richard loved him as his son;
And when the days of peace were done,
And to the gales of war he gave
The banner of his sires to wave,
Redmond, distinguished by his care,
He chose that honoured flag to bear,
And named his page, the next degree
In that old time to chivalry.*
In five pitched fields he well maintained
The honoured place his worth obtained,
And high was Redmond's youthful name
Blazed in the roll of martial fame.
Had fortune smiled on Marston fight,
The eve had seen him dubbed a knight;
Twice 'mid the battle's doubtful strife,
Of Rokeby's Lord he saved the life,
But when he saw him prisoner made,
He kissed and then resigned his blade,

* Originally the order of chivalry embraced three ranks.—1. The Page; 2. The Squire; 3. The Knight;—a gradation which seems to have been imitated in the mystery of Freemasonry. But before the reign of Charles I. the custom of serving as a squire had fallen into disuse, though the order of the page was still, to a certain degree, in observance. This state of servitude was so far from inferring anything degrading, that it was considered as the regular school for acquiring every quality necessary for future distinction.

And yielded him an easy prey
To those who led the Knight away;
Resolved Matilda's sire should prove,
In prison, as in fight, his love.

XVII.

When lovers meet in adverse hour,
'Tis like a sun-glimpse through a shower,
A watery ray, an instant seen
The darkly closing clouds between.
As Redmond on the turf reclined,
The past and present filled his mind:
"It was not thus," Affection said,
"I dreamed of my return, dear maid!
Not thus, when from thy trembling hand,
I took the banner and the brand,
When round me, as the bugles blew,
Their blades three hundred warriors drew,
And, while the standard I unrolled,
Clashed their bright arms with clamour bold.
Where is that banner now?—its pride
Lies 'whelmed in Ouse's sullen tide!
Where now these warriors?—in their gore,
They cumber Marston's dismal moor!
And what avails a useless brand,
Held by a captive's shackled hand,
That only would his life retain,
To aid thy sire to bear his chain!"—
Thus Redmond to himself apart,
Nor lighter was his rival's heart;
For Wilfrid, while his generous soul
Disdained to profit by control,
By many a sign could mark too plain,
Save with such aid, his hopes were vain.
But now Matilda's accents stole
On the dark visions of their soul,
And bade their mournful musing fly,
Like mist before the zephyr's sigh.

XVIII.

"I need not to my friends recall,
How Mortham shunned my father's hall;
A man of silence and of woe,
Yet ever anxious to bestow
On my poor self whate'er could prove
A kinsman's confidence and love.
My feeble aid could sometimes chase
The clouds of sorrow for a space:
But oftener, fixed beyond my power,
I marked his deep despondence lower,
One dismal cause, by all unguessed,
His fearful confidence confessed,

And twice it was my hap to see
Examples of that agony,
Which for a season can o'erstrain
And wreck the structure of the brain.
He had the awful power to know
The approaching mental overthrow,
And while his mind had courage yet
To struggle with the dreadful fit,
The victim writhed against its throes,
Like wretch beneath a murderer's blows.
This malady, I well could mark,
Sprung from some direful cause and dark,
But still he kept its source concealed,
Till arming for the civil field;
Then in my charge he bade me hold
A treasure huge of gems and gold,
With this disjointed dismal scroll,
That tells the secret of his soul,
In such wild words as oft betray
A mind by anguish forced astray."

XIX.

MORTHAM'S HISTORY.

"Matilda! thou hast seen me start,
As if a dagger thrilled my heart,
When it has happed some casual phrase
Waked memory of my former days.
Believe that few can backward cast
Their thoughts with pleasure on the past,
But I!—my youth was rash and vain,
And blood and rage my manhood stain,
And my grey hairs must now descend
To my cold grave without a friend!
Even thou, Matilda, wilt disown
Thy kinsman, when his guilt is known.
And must I lift the bloody veil,
That hides my dark and fatal tale!
I must—I will—Pale phantom, cease,
Leave me one little hour in peace!
Thus haunted, think'st thou I have skill,
Thine own commission to fulfil?
Or, while thou point'st with gesture fierce,
Thy blighted cheek, thy bloody hearse,
How can I paint thee as thou wert,
So fair in face, so warm in heart!—

XX.

"Yes, she was fair!—Matilda, thou
Hast a soft sadness on thy brow;
But hers was like the sunny glow
That laughs on earth and all below!
We wedded secret—there was need—
Differing in country and in creed;

—— —— —— —— we spied,
With hurried step my Edith glide,
Cowering beneath the verdant screen,
As one unwilling to be seen.

And when to Mortham's tower she came,
We mentioned not her race and name,
Until thy sire, who fought afar,
Should turn him home from foreign war,
On whose kind influence we relied
To soothe her father's ire and pride.
Few months we lived, retired, unknown,
To all but one dear friend alone,
One darling friend—I spare his shame,
I will not write the villain's name!
My trespasses I might forget,
And sue in vengeance for the debt
Due by a brother worm to me,
Ungrateful to God's clemency,
That spared me penitential time
Nor cut me off amid my crime.—

XXI

"A kindly smile to all she lent,
But on her husband's friend 'twas bent
So kind, that from its harmless glee,
The wretch misconstrued villany.
Repulsed in his presumptuous love,
A vengeful snare the traitor wove.
Alone we sat—the flask had flowed,
My blood with heat unwonted glowed,
When through the alleyed walk we spied
With hurried step my Edith glide,
Cowering beneath the verdant screen,
As one unwilling to be seen.
Words cannot paint the fiendish smile,
That curled the traitor's cheek the while!
Fiercely I questioned of the cause;
He made a cold and artful pause,
Then prayed it might not chafe my mood—
'There was a gallant in the wood!'—
We had been shooting at the deer;—
My cross-bow (evil chance!) was near:
That ready weapon of my wrath
I caught, and, hasting up the path,
In the yew grove my wife I found,
A stranger's arms her neck had bound!
I marked his heart—the bow I drew—
I loosed the shaft—'twas more than true!
I found my Edith's dying charms
Locked in her murdered brother's arms!
He came in secret to inquire
Her state, and reconcile her sire.—

XXII.

"All fled my rage—the villain first,
Whose craft my jealousy had nursed;
He sought in far and foreign clime
To 'scape the vengeance of his crime.

The manner of the slaughter done
Was known to few, my guilt to none;
Some tale my faithful steward framed—
I know not what—of shaft mis-aimed;
And even from those the act who knew,
He hid the hand from which it flew.*
Untouched by human laws I stood,
But GOD had heard the cry of blood!—
There is a blank upon my mind,
A fearful vision ill-defined,
Of raving till my flesh was torn,
Of dungeon-bolts and fetters worn—
And when I waked to woe more mild,
And questioned of my infant child—
(Have I not written, that she bare
A boy, like summer morning fair?)
With looks confused my menials tell,
That armèd men in Mortham dell
Beset the nurse's evening way,
And bore her, with her charge, away.
My faithless friend, and none but he,
Could profit by this villany;
Him then, I sought, with purpose dread
Of treble vengeance on his head!
He 'scaped me—but my bosom's wound
Some faint relief from wandering found;
And over distant land and sea
I bore my load of misery.

XXIII.

"'Twas then that fate my footsteps led.
Among a daring crew and dread,
With whom full oft my hated life
I ventured in such desperate strife,
That even my fierce associates saw
My frantic deeds with doubt and awe.
Much then I learned, and much can show,
Of human guilt and human woe,
Yet ne'er have, in my wanderings, known
A wretch, whose sorrows matched my own!—
It chanced, that after battle fray,
Upon the bloody field we lay;
The yellow moon her lustre shed
Upon the wounded and the dead,
While, sense in toil and wassail drowned,
My ruffian comrades slept around.
There came a voice—its silver tone
Was soft, Matilda, as thine own—

* First edition:—

"And even from those the act who knew,
He hid the hand the dart that threw."

'Ah, wretch!' it said, 'what makest thou here,
While unavenged my bloody bier,
While unprotected lives mine heir,
Without a father's name and care?'—

XXIV.

"I heard—obeyed—and homeward drew;
The fiercest of our desperate crew
I brought at time of need to aid
My purposed vengeance, long delayed.
But, humble be my thanks to Heaven,
That better hopes and thoughts has given,
And by our Lord's dear prayer has taught,
Mercy by mercy must be bought!—
Let me in misery rejoice—
I've seen his face—I've heard his voice—
I claimed of him my only child—
As he disowned the theft, he smiled!
That very calm and callous look,
That fiendish sneer his visage took,
As when he said, in scornful mood,
'There is a gallant in the wood!'—
—I did not slay him as he stood—
All praise be to my Maker given!
Long sufferance is one path to heaven."—

XXV.

Thus far the woeful tale was heard,
When something in the thicket stirred.
Up Redmond sprung; the villain Guy,
(For he it was that lurked so nigh,)
Drew back—he durst not cross his steel
A moment's space with brave O'Neale,
For all the treasured gold that rests
In Mortham's iron-banded chests.
Redmond resumed his seat;—he said,
Some roe was rustling in the shade.
Bertram laughed grimly, when he saw
His timorous comrade backward draw:
"A trusty mate art thou, to fear
A single arm, and aid so near!
Yet have I seen thee mark a deer.
Give me thy carabine—I'll show
An art that thou wilt gladly know,
How thou mayst safely quell a foe."—

XXVI.

On hands and knees fierce Bertram drew
The spreading birch and hazels through,
Till he had Redmond full in view,
The gun he levelled—mark like this
Was Bertram never known to miss,

When fair opposed to aim there sate
An object of his mortal* hate.
That day young Redmond's death had seen,
But twice Matilda came between
The carabine and Redmond's breast,
Just ere the spring his finger pressed.
A deadly oath the ruffian swore,
But yet his fell design forbore:
"It ne'er," he muttered, "shall be said,
That thus I scathed thee, haughty maid!"
Then moved to seek more open aim,
When to his side Guy Denzil came:
"Bertram, forbear!—we are undone
For ever, if thou fire the gun.
By all the fiends, an armed force
Descends the dell, of foot and horse!
We perish if they hear a shot—
Madman! we have a safer plot—
Nay, friend, be ruled, and bear thee back!
Behold, down yonder hollow track,
The warlike leader of the band
Comes, with his broadsword his hand."—
Bertram looked up; he saw, he knew
That Denzil's fears had counselled true,
Then cursed his fortune and withdrew,
Threaded the woodlands undescried,
And gained the cave on Greta side.

XXVII.

They whom dark Bertram, in his wrath,
Doomed to captivity or death,
Their thoughts to one sad subject lent,
Saw not nor heard the ambushment.
Heedless and unconcerned they sate,
While on the very verge of fate;
Heedless and unconcerned remained,
When Heaven the murderer's arm restrained.
As ships drift darkling down the tide,
Nor see the shelves o'er which they glide.
Uninterrupted thus they heard
What Mortham's closing tale declared.
He spoke of wealth as of a load,
By Fortune on a wretch bestowed,
In bitter mockery of hate,
His cureless woes to aggravate;
But yet he prayed Matilda's care
Might save that treasure for his heir—
His Edith's son—for still he raved
As confident his life was saved;
In frequent vision, he averred,
He saw his face, his voice he heard.

* First edition, "venome."

Then argued calm—had murder been,
The blood, the corpses, had been seen;
Some had pretended, too, to mark
On Windermere a stranger bark,
Whose crew, with jealous care, yet mild,
Guarded a female and a child.
While these faint proofs he told and pressed,
Hope seemed to kindle in his breast;
Though inconsistent, vague, and vain,
It warped his judgment, and his brain.

XXVIII.

These solemn words his story close:—
"Heaven witness for me, that I chose
My part in this sad civil fight,
Moved by no cause but England's right.
My country's groans have bid me draw
My sword for gospel and for law;—
These righted, I fling arms aside,
And seek my son through Europe wide.
My wealth, on which a kinsman nigh
Already casts a grasping eye,
With thee may unsuspected lie.
When of my death Matilda hears,
Let her retain her trust three years;
If none, from me, the treasure claim,
Perished is Mortham's race and name;
Then let it leave her generous hand,
And flow in bounty o'er the land;
Soften the wounded prisoner's lot,
Rebuild the peasant's ruined cot;
So spoils, acquired by fight afar,
Shall mitigate domestic war."—

XXIX.

The generous youths, who well had known,
Of Mortham's mind the powerful tone,
To that high mind, by sorrow swerved;
Gave sympathy his woes deserved;
But Wilfrid chief, who saw revealed,
Why Mortham wished his life concealed,
In secret, doubtless, to pursue
The schemes his wildered fancy drew.
Thoughtful he heard Matilda tell,
That she would share her father's cell,
His partner of captivity,
Where'er his prison-house should be;
Yet grieved to think that Rokeby-hall,
Dismantled, and forsook by all,
Open to rapine and to stealth,
Had now no safeguard for the wealth
Intrusted by her kinsman kind,
And for such noble use designed.

"Was Barnard Castle then her choice,"
Wilfrid inquired with hasty voice,
"Since there the victor's laws ordain,
Her father must a space remain?"—
A fluttered hope his accents shook,
A fluttered joy was in his look.
Matilda hastened to reply,
For anger flashed in Redmond's eye;—
"Duty," she said, with gentle grace,
"Kind Wilfrid, has no choice of place,
Else had I for my sire assigned
Prison less galling to his mind,
Than that his wild-wood haunts which sees,
And hears the murmur of the Tees,
Recalling thus, with every glance,
What captive's sorrow can enhance;
But where those woes are highest, there
Needs Rokeby most his daughter's care."—

XXX.

He felt the kindly check she gave,
And stood abashed—then answered grave:—
"I sought thy purpose, noble maid,
Thy doubts to clear, thy schemes to aid.
I have beneath mine own command,
So wills my sire, a gallant band,
And well could send some horseman wight,
To bear the treasure forth by night,
And so bestow it as you deem
In these ill days may safest seem."—
"Thanks, gentle Wilfrid, thanks," she said:
"O be it not one day delayed,
And, more thy sister-friend to aid,
Be thou thyself content to hold,
In thine own keeping, Mortham's gold,
Safest with thee."—While thus she spoke,
Armed soldiers on their converse broke,
The same of whose approach afraid,
The ruffians left their ambuscade.
Their chief to Wilfrid bended low,
Then looked around as for a foe.
"What mean'st thou, friend," young Wycliffe said,
"Why thus in arms beset the glade?"—
"That would I gladly learn from you,
For up my squadron as I drew,
To exercise our martial game
Upon the moor of Barninghame,
A stranger told you were waylaid,
Surrounded, and to death betrayed.
He had a leader's voice, I ween,
A falcon glance, a warrior's mien.
He bade me bring you instant aid;
I doubted not, and I obeyed."—

XXXI.

Wilfrid changed colour, and amazed,
Turned short, and on the speaker gazed;
While Redmond every thicket round
Tracked earnest as a questing hound,
And Denzil's carabine he found;
Sure evidence, by which they knew
The warning was as kind as true.
Wisest it seemed, with cautious speed
To leave the dell. It was agreed,
That Redmond, with Matilda fair,
And fitting guard, should home repair;
At nightfall Wilfrid should attend,
With a strong band, his sister-friend,
To bear with her from Rokeby's bowers
To Barnard Castle's lofty towers,,
Secret and safe the banded chests,
In which the wealth of Mortham rests.
This hasty purpose fixed, they part,
Each with a grieved and anxious heart.

CANTO FIFTH.

I.

The sultry summer day is done,
The western hills have hid the sun,
But mountain peak and village spire
Retain reflection of his fire.
Old Barnard's towers are purple still,
To those that gaze from Toller-hill;
Distant and high, the tower of Bowes
Like steel upon the anvil glows;
And Stanmore's ridge, behind that lay,
Rich with the spoils of parting day,
In crimson and in gold arrayed,
Streaks yet a while the closing shade,
Then slow resigns to darkening heaven
The tints which brighter hours had given.
Thus aged men, full loath and slow,
The vanities of life forego,
And count their youthful follies o'er,
Till Memory lends her light no more.

II.

The eve, that slow on upland fades,
Has darker closed on Rokeby's glades,
Where, sunk within their banks profound,
Her guardian streams to meeting wound.

The stately oaks, whose sombre frown
Of noontide made a twilght brown,
Impervious now to fainter light,
Of twilight make an early night.
Hoarse into middle air arose
The vespers of the roosting crows,
And with congenial murmurs seem
To wake the Genii of the stream;
For louder clamoured Greta's tide,
And Tees in deeper voice replied,
And fitful waked the evening wind,
Fitful in sighs its breath resigned.
Wilfrid, whose fancy-nurtured soul
Felt in the scene a soft control,
With lighter footstep pressed the ground,
And often paused to look around;
And, though his path was to his love,
Could not but linger in the grove,
To drink the thrilling interest dear,
Of awful pleasure checked by fear.
Such inconsistent moods have we,
Even when our passions strike the key.

III.

Now through the wood's dark mazes passed,
The opening lawn he reached at last,
Where, silvered by the moonlight ray,
The ancient Hall before him lay.
Those martial terrors long were fled,
That frowned of old around its head:
The battlements, the turrets grey,
Seemed half abandoned to decay;*
On barbican and keep of stone
Stern Time the foeman's work had done;
Where banners the invader braved,
The harebell now and wallflower waved;
In the rude guard-room, where of yore
Their weary hours the warders wore,
Now, while the cheerful faggots blaze,
On the paved floor the spindle plays;
The flanking guns dismounted lie,
The moat is ruinous and dry,
The grim portcullis gone—and all
The fortress turned to peaceful hall.

*The ancient castle of Rokeby stood exactly upon the site of the present mansion, by which a part of its walls is enclosed. It is surrounded by a profusion of fine wood, and the park in which it stands is adorned by the junction of the Greta and of the Tees. The title of Baron Rokeby of Armagh was, in 1777, conferred on the Right Reverend R. Robinson, Primate of Ireland, descended of the Robinsons, formerly of Rokeby, in Yorkshire.

IV.

But yet precautions, lately ta'en,
Showed danger's day revived again;
The court-yard wall showed marks of care,
The fallen defences to repair,
Lending such strength as might withstand
The insult of marauding band.
The beams once more were taught to bear
The trembling drawbridge into air,
And not till questioned o'er and o'er,
For Wilfrid oped the jealous door;
And when he entered, bolt and bar
Resumed their place with sullen jar;
Then as he crossed the vaulted porch,
The old grey porter raised his torch,
And viewed him o'er, from foot to head,
Ere to the hall his steps he led.
That huge old hall, of knightly state,
Dismantled seemed and desolate.
The moon through transom-shafts* of stone
Which crossed the latticed oriels, shone,
And by the mournful light she gave,
The Gothic vault seemed funeral cave.
Pennon and banner waved no more
O'er beams of stag or tusks of boar,
Nor glimmering arms were marshalled seen,
To glance those sylvan spoils between.
Those arms, those ensigns, borne away,
Accomplished Rokeby's brave array,
But all were lost on Marston's day!
Yet here and there the moonbeams fall
Where armour yet adorns the wall,
Cumbrous of size, uncouth to sight,
And useless in the modern fight;
Like veteran relic of the wars,
Known only by neglected scars.

V.

Matilda soon to greet him came,
And bade them light the evening flame;
Said, all for parting was prepared,
And tarried but for Wilfrid's guard.
But then,† reluctant to unfold
His father's avarice of gold,
He hinted, that, lest jealous eye
Should on their precious burden pry
He judged it best the castle gate
To enter when the night wore late;

* A term generally applied to beams fixed cross-ways.
† First edition, "all."

And therefore he had left command
With those he trusted of his band,
That they should be at Rokeby met,
What time the midnight-watch was set.
Now Redmond came, whose anxious care
Till then was busied to prepare
All needful, meetly to arrange
The mansion for its mournful change.
With Wilfrid's care and kindness pleased,
His cold unready hand he seized,
And pressed it, till his kindly strain
The gentle youth returned again.
Seemed as between them this was said,
"Awhile let jealousy be dead;
And let our contest be, whose care
Shall best assist this helpless fair."—

VI.

There was no speech the truce to bind,
It was a compact of the mind;
A generous thought, at once impressed
On either rival's generous breast.
Matilda well the secret took,
From sudden change of mien and look,
And—for not small had been her fear
Of jealous ire and danger near—
Felt, even in her dejected state,
A joy beyond the reach of fate.
They closed beside the chimney's blaze,
And talked and hoped for happier days,
And lent their spirits' rising glow
Awhile to gild impending woe;—
High privilege of youthful time,
Worth all the pleasures of our prime!
The bickering faggot sparkled bright,
And gave the scene of love to sight,
Bade Wilfrid's cheek more lively glow,
Played on Matilda's neck of snow,
Her nut-brown curls and forehead high,
And laughed in Redmond's azure eye.
Two lovers by the maiden sate,
Without a glance of jealous hate;
The maid her lovers sat between,
With open brow and equal mien:—
It is a sight but rarely spied,
Thanks to man's wrath and woman's pride.

VII.

While thus in peaceful guise they sate,
A knock alarmed the outer gate,
And ere the tardy porter stirred,
The tinkling of a harp was heard.

A manly voice of mellow swell,
Bore burden to the music well.

SONG.

"Summer eve is gone and passed,
Summer dew is falling fast;
I have wandered all the day,
Do not bid me farther stray!
Gentle hearts of gentle kin,
Take the wandering Harper in!"

But the stern porter answer gave,
With "Get thee hence, thou strolling knave!
The king wants soldiers; war, I trow,
Were meeter trade for such as thou."—
At this unkind reproof again
Answered the ready minstrel's strain.

SONG RESUMED.

"Bid not me, in battle-field,
Buckler lift, or broadsword wield!
All my strength and all my art
Is to touch the gentle heart,
With the wizard notes that ring
From the peaceful minstrel-string."—

The porter, all unmoved, replied,—
"Depart in peace, with Heaven to guide;
If longer by the gate thou dwell,
Trust me, thou shalt not part so well."—

VIII.

With somewhat of appealing look,
The Harper's part young Wilfrid took;
"These notes so wild and ready thrill,
They show no vulgar minstrel's skill;
Hard were his task to seek a home
More distant, since the night is come;
And for his faith I dare engage—
Your Harpool's blood is soured by age;
His gate, once readily displayed,
To greet the friend, the poor to aid,
Now even to me, though known of old,
Did but reluctantly unfold."—
—"O blame not, as poor Harpool's crime,
An evil of this evil time.
He deems dependent on his care,
The safety of his patron's heir,
Nor judges meet to ope the tower
To guest unknown at parting hour,*

* First edition:—

"To vagrants at our parting hour."

Urging his duty to excess
Of rough and stubborn faithfulness.
For this poor Harper I would fain
He may relax:—Hark to his strain!"—

IX.

SONG RESUMED.

"I have song of war for knight,
Lay of love for lady bright,
Fairy tale to lull the heir,
Goblin grim the maids to scare;
Dark the night, and long till day,
Do not bid me farther stray!

"Rokeby's* lords of martial fame,
I can count them name by name;
Legends of their line there be,
Known to few, but known to me;
If you honour Rokeby's kin,
Take the wandering Harper in!

"Rokeby's lords had fair regard
For the harp, and for the bard;
Baron's race throve never well,
Where the curse of minstrel fell.
If you love that noble kin,
Take the weary Harper in!"—

"Hark! Harpool parleys—there is hope,"
Said Redmond, "that the gate will ope."—
"For all thy brag and boast, I trow,
Nought know'st thou of the Felon Sow,"†
Quoth Harpool, "nor how Greta-side
She roamed, and Rokeby forest wide;
Nor how Ralph Rokeby gave the beast
To Richmond's friars to make a feast.
Of Gilbert Griffinson the tale
Goes, and of gallant Peter Dale,
That well could strike with sword amain,
And of the valiant son of Spain,
Friar Middleton, and blithe Sir Ralph;
There were a jest to make us laugh!
If thou canst tell it, in yon shed,
Thou'st won thy supper and thy bed."—

* This was a very ancient and powerful family, said to have come over with the Conqueror.

† The ancient minstrels had a comic, as well as a serious strain of romance, and although the examples of the latter are by far the most numerous, they are, perhaps, the less valuable. The comic romance was a sort of parody upon the usual subjects of minstrel poetry. One of the very best of these mock romances, and which has no small portion of comic humour is the "Hunting of the Felon Sow of Rokeby by the Friars of Richmond."

X.

Matilda smiled; "Cold hope," said she,
"From Harpool's love of minstrelsy!
But, for this Harper, may we dare,
Redmond, to mend his couch and fare?"—
"O ask not me!—at minstrel-string
My heart from infancy would spring;
Nor can I hear its simplest strain,
But it brings Erin's dream again,
When placed by Owen Lysagh's knee,
(The Filea of O'Neale was he,*
A blind and bearded man, whose eld
Was sacred as a prophet's held,)
I've seen a ring of rugged kerne,
With aspects shaggy, wild, and stern,
Enchanted by the master's lay,
Linger around the livelong day,
Shift from wild rage to wilder glee,
To love, to grief, to ecstasy,
And feel each varied change of soul
Obedient to the bard's control.—
Ah, Clandeboy!† thy friendly floor
Slieve-Donard's oak shall light no more:
Nor Owen's harp, beside the blaze,
Tell maiden's love, or hero's praise!
The mantling brambles hide thy hearth,
Centre of hospitable mirth;
All undistinguished in the glade,
My sires' glad home is prostrate laid,
Their vassals wander wide and far,
Serve foreign lords in distant war,
And now the stranger's sons enjoy
The lovely woods of Clandeboy!"—
He spoke, and proudly turned aside,
The starting tear to dry and hide.

XI.

Matilda's dark and softened eye
Was glistening ere O'Neale's was dry.
Her hand upon his arm she laid,—
"It is the will of heaven," she said.
"And think'st thou, Redmond, I can part
From this loved home with lightsome heart,
Leaving to wild neglect whate'er
Even from my infancy was dear?

* The Filea, or Ollamh Re Dan, was the proper bard, or, as the name literally implies, poet. Each chieftain of distinction had one or more in his service, whose office was usually hereditary.

† Clandeboy is a district of Ulster, formerly possessed by the sept of the O'Neales, and Slieve-Donard, a romantic mountain in the same province. The clan was ruined after Tyrone's great rebellion, and their places of abode laid desolate.

For in this calm domestic bound
Were all Matilda's pleasures found.
That hearth, my sire was wont to grace,
Full soon may be a stranger's place;
This hall, in which a child I played,
Like thine, dear Redmond, lowly laid,
The bramble and the thorn may braid;
Or, passed for aye from me and mine,
It ne'er may shelter Rokeby's line.
Yet is this consolation given,
My Redmond,—'tis the will of heaven."—
Her word, her action, and her phrase,
Were kindly as in early days;
For cold reserve had lost its power,
In sorrow's sympathetic hour.
Young Redmond dared not trust his voice;
But rather had it been his choice
To share that melancholy hour,
Than, armed with all a chieftain's power,
In full possession to enjoy
Slieve-Donard wide, and Clandeboy.

XII.

The blood left Wilfrid's ashen cheek;
Matilda sees, and hastes to speak.—
"Happy in friendship's ready aid,
Let all my murmurs here be stayed!
And Rokeby's maiden will not part
From Rokeby's hall with moody heart.
This night at least, for Rokeby's fame,
The hospitable hearth shall flame,
And, ere its native heir retire,
Find for the wanderer rest and fire,
While this poor Harper, by the blaze,
Recounts the tale of other days.
Bid Harpool ope the door with speed,
Admit him, and relieve each need.—
Meantime, kind Wycliffe, wilt thou try
Thy minstrel skill?—nay, no reply—
And look not sad!—I guess thy thought,
Thy verse with laurels would be bought;
And poor Matilda, landless now,
Has not a garland for thy brow.
True, I must leave sweet Rokeby's glades,
Nor wander more in Greta shades;
But sure, no rigid jailer, thou
Wilt a short prison-walk allow,
Where summer flowers grow wild at will,
On Marwood-chase and Toller Hill;*

* Marwood chase is the old park extending along the Durham side of the Tees, attached to Barnard Castle. Toller Hill is an eminence

Then holly green and lily gay
Shall twine in guerdon of thy lay."—
The mournful youth, a space aside,
To tune Matilda's harp applied;
And then a low sad descant rung,
As prelude to the lay he sung.

XIII.

THE CYPRESS WREATH.

O Lady, twine no wreath for me,
Or twine it of the cypress-tree!
Too lively glow the lilies light,
The varnished holly 's all too bright,
The May-flower and the eglantine
May shade a brow less sad than mine;
But, Lady, weave no wreath for me,
Or weave it of the cypress-tree!

Let dimpled Mirth his temples twine
With tendrils of the laughing vine;
The manly oak, the pensive yew
To patriot and to sage be due;
The myrtle bough bids lovers live,
But that Matilda will not give;
Then, Lady, twine no wreath for me,
Or twine it of the cypress-tree!

Let merry England proudly rear
Her blended roses, bought so dear;
Let Albin bind her bonnet blue
With heath and harebell dipped in dew;
On favoured Erin's crest be seen
The flower she loves of emerald green—
But, Lady, twine no wreath for me,
Or twine it of the cypress-tree.

Strike the wild harp, while maids prepare
The ivy meet for minstrel's hair;
And, while his crown of laurel-leaves
With bloody hand the victor weaves,
Let the loud trump his triumph tell;
But when you hear the passing bell,
Then, Lady, twine a wreath for me,
And twine it of the cypress-tree.

Yes! twine for me the cypress bough;
But, O Matilda, twine not now!
Stay till a few brief months are passed,
And I have looked and loved my last!

on the Yorkshire side of the river, commanding a superb view of the ruins.

When villagers my shroud bestrew
With pansies, rosemary, and rue,—
Then, Lady, weave a wreath for me,
And weave it of the cypress-tree.

XIV

O'Neale observed the starting tear,
And spoke with kind and blithesome cheer—
"No, noble Wilfrid! ere the day
When mourns the land thy silent lay,
Shall many a wreath be freely wove
By hand of friendship and of love.
I would not wish that rigid Fate
Had doomed thee to a captive's state,
Whose hands are bound by honour's law,
Who wears a sword he must not draw:
But were it so, in minstrel pride
The land together would we ride,
On prancing steeds, like harpers old,
Bound for the halls of barons bold;
Each lover of the lyre we'd seek,
From Michael's Mount to Skiddaw's Peak,
Survey wild Albin's mountain strand,
And roam green Erin's lovely land,
While thou the gentler souls should move,
With lay of pity and of love,
And I, thy mate, in rougher strain,
Would sing of war and warriors slain.
Old England's bards were vanquished then,
And Scotland's vaunted Hawthornden,*
And, silenced on Iernian shore,
M'Curtin's† harp should charm no more!"—
In lively mood he spoke, to wile
From Wilfrid's woe-worn cheek a smile.

XV.

"But," said Matilda, "ere thy name,
Good Redmond, gain its destined fame,
Say, wilt thou kindly deign to call
Thy brother minstrel to the hall?
Bid all the household, too, attend,
Each in his rank a humble friend;
I know their faithful hearts will grieve,
When their poor Mistress takes her leave,
So let the horn and beaker flow
To mitigate their parting woe."—

* Drummond of Hawthornden was in the zenith of his reputation as a poet during the civil wars. He died in 1649.

† MacCurtin, hereditary Ollamh of North Munster, and Filea to Donough, earl of Thomond, and President of Munster. This nobleman was amongst those who were prevailed upon to join Elizabeth's forces.

The Harper came:—in youth's first prime
Himself; in mode of olden time
His garb was fashioned, to express
The ancient English minstrel's dress,*
A seemly gown of Kendal green,
With gorget closed of silver sheen;
His harp in silken scarf was slung,
And by his side an anlace† hung.
It seemed some masquer's quaint array,
For revel or for holiday.

XVI.

He made obeisance with a free
Yet studied air of courtesy.
Each look and accent, framed to please,
Seemed to affect a playful ease;
His face was of that doubtful kind,
That wins the eye, but not the mind;
Yet harsh it seemed to deem amiss
Of brow so young and smooth as this.
His was the subtle look and sly,
That, spying all, seems nought to spy;
Round all the group his glances stole,
Unmarked themselves, to mark the whole;
Yet sunk beneath Matilda's look,
Nor could the eye of Redmond brook.
To the suspicious, or the old,
Subtle and dangerous and bold
Had seemed this self-invited guest;
But young our lovers,—and the rest,
Wrapt in their sorrow and their fear
At parting of their mistress dear,
Tear-blinded to the Castle hall,
Came as to bear her funeral pall.

XVII.

All that expression base was gone,
When waked the guest his minstrel tone;
It fled at inspiration's call,
As erst the Demon fled from Saul.
More noble glance he cast around,
More free-drawn breath inspired the sound,
His pulse beat bolder and more high,
In all the pride of minstrelsy!

* Among the entertainments presented to Elizabeth at Kenilworth Castle, was the introduction of a person designed to represent a travelling minstrel, who entertained her with a solemn story out of the Acts of King Arthur. Of this person's dress and appearance Mr. Laneham has given us a very accurate account, transferred by Bishop Percy to the preliminary dissertation on minstrels, prefixed to his "Reliques of Ancient Poetry," vol. i.

† A kind of knife or dagger, worn at the girdle.—*Wright.*

Alas! too soon that pride was o'er,
Sunk with the lay that bade it soar!
His soul resumed, with habit's chain,
Its vices wild and follies vain,
And gave the talent, with him born,
To be a common curse and scorn.
Such was the youth whom Rokeby's maid,
With condescending kindness, prayed
Here to renew the strain she loved,
At distance heard and well approved.

XVIII.

SONG.

THE HARP.

I was a wild and wayward boy,
My childhood scorned each childish toy;
Retired from all, reserved, and coy,
To musing prone,
I wooed my solitary joy,
My Harp alone.

My youth, with bold Ambition's mood,
Despised the humble stream and wood,
Where my poor father's cottage stood,
To fame unknown;—
What should my soaring views make good?
My Harp alone.

Love came with all his frantic fire,
And wild romance of vain desire;
The Baron's daughter heard my lyre,
And praised the tone;—
What could presumptuous hope inspire?
My Harp alone.

At Manhood's touch the bubble burst,
And Manhood's pride the vision curst,
And all that had my folly nursed
Love's sway to own;
Yet spared the spell that lulled me first,
My Harp alone.

Woe came with war, and want with woe;
And it was mine to undergo
Each outrage of the rebel foe:—
Can aught atone
My fields laid* waste, my cot laid low?
My Harp alone!

Ambition's dreams I've seen depart,
Have rued of penury the smart,

* First edition, "made."

Have felt of love the venomed dart
When hope was flown;
Yet rests one solace to my heart,—
My Harp alone!

Then, over mountain, moor, and hill,
My faithful harp, I'll bear thee still;
And when this life of want and ill
Is well nigh gone,
Thy strings mine elegy shall thrill,
My Harp alone!

XIX.

"A pleasing lay," Matilda said;
But Harpool shook his old grey head
And took his baton and his torch,
To seek his guard-room in the porch.
Edmund observed—with sudden change,
Among the strings his fingers range,
Until they waked a bolder glee
Of military melody;
Then paused amid the martial sound,
And looked with well-feigned fear around;—
"None to this noble house belong,"
He said, "that would a minstrel wrong,
Whose fate has been, through good and ill,
To love his Royal Master still;
And, with your honoured leave, would fain
Rejoice you with a loyal strain."—
Then, as assured by sign and look,
The warlike tone again he took;
And Harpool stopped and turned to hear,
A ditty of the Cavalier.

XX.

SONG.

THE CAVALIER.

While the dawn on the mountain was misty and grey,
My True Love has mounted his steed and away,
Over hill, over valley, o'er dale, and o'er down;
Heaven shield the brave gallant that fights for the Crown!

He has doffed the silk doublet the breastplate to bear,
He has placed the steel-cap o'er his long flowing hair,
From his belt to his stirrup his broadsword hangs down,—
Heaven shield the brave gallant that fights for the Crown!

For the rights of fair England that broadsword he draws,
Her King is his leader, her Church is his cause;
His watchword is honour, his pay is renown,—
God strike with the gallant that strikes for the Crown.

They may boast of their Fairfax, their Waller, and all
The round-headed rebels of Westminster Hall;
But tell these bold traitors of London's proud town,*
That the spears of the North have encircled the Crown.

There's Derby and Cavendish, dread of their foes;
There's Erin's high Ormond, and Scotland's Montrose!
Would you match the base Skippon, and Massey, and Brown,
With the Barons of England, that fight for the Crown?

Now joy to the crest of the brave Cavalier!
Be his banner unconquered, resistless his spear,
Till in peace and in triumph his toils he may drown,
In a pledge to fair England, her Church, and her Crown!

XXI.

"Alas!" Matilda said, "that strain,
Good Harper, now is heard in vain!
The time has been, at such a sound,
When Rokeby's vassals gathered round,
A hundred manly hearts would bound;
But now, the stirring verse we hear,
Like trump in dying soldier's ear!
Listless and sad the notes we own,
The power to answer them is flown.
Yet not without his meet applause
Be he that sings the rightful cause,
Even when the crisis of its fate
To human eye seems desperate.
While Rokeby's heir such power retains,
Let this slight guerdon pay thy pains:—
And lend thy harp; I fain would try,
If my poor skill can aught supply,
Ere yet I leave my fathers' hall,
To mourn the cause in which we fall."

XXII.

The Harper, with a downcast look,
And trembling hand, her bounty took.
As yet, the conscious pride of art
Had steeled him in his treacherous part;
A powerful spring, of force unguessed,
That hath each gentler mood suppressed,
And reigned in many a human breast,
From his that plans the red campaign,
To his that wastes the woodland reign.
The failing wing, the blood-shot eye,
The sportsman marks with apathy,
Each feeling of his victim's ill
Drowned in his own successful skill.

* First edition "of proud London town."

The veteran, too, who now no more
Aspires to head the battle's roar,
Loves still the triumph of his art,
And traces on the pencilled chart
Some stern invader's destined way,
Through blood and ruin to his prey:
Patriots to death, and towns to flame,
He dooms, to raise another's name,
And shares the guilt, though not the fame.
What pays him for his span of time
Spent in premeditated crime?
What against pity arms his heart?
It is the conscious pride of art.

XXIII.

But principles in Edmund's mind
Were baseless, vague, and undefined.
His soul, like bark with rudder* lost,
On passion's changeful tide was tossed;
Nor Vice nor Virtue had the power
Beyond the impression of the hour;
And, O! when passion rules, how rare
The hours that fall to Virtue's share!
Yet now she roused her—for the pride,
That lack of sterner guilt supplied,
Could scarce support him when arose
The lay that mourned Matilda's woes.

SONG.

THE FAREWELL.

The sound of Rokeby's woods I hear,
They mingle with the song;
Dark Greta's voice is in mine ear,
I must not hear them long.
From every loved and native haunt
The native heir must stray,
And, like a ghost whom sunbeams daunt,
Must part before the day.

Soon from the halls my fathers reared,
Their scutcheons may descend.
A line so long beloved and feared
May soon obscurely end.
No longer here Matilda's tone
Shall bid these echoes swell,
Yet shall they hear her proudly own
The cause in which we fell.

The Lady paused; and then again
Resumed the lay in loftier strain.

* First edition, "whose rudder's."

XXIV.

Let our halls and towers decay
Be our name and line forgot,
Lands and manors pass away,—
We but share our monarch's lot.
If no more our annals show
Battles won and banners taken,
Still in death, defeat, and woe,
Ours be loyalty unshaken!

Constant still in danger's hour,
Princes owned our fathers' aid;
Lands and honours, wealth and power,
Well their loyalty repaid.
Perish wealth, and power, and pride!
Mortal boons by mortals given;
But let Constancy abide,
Constancy's the gift of Heaven.

XXV.

While thus Matilda's lay was heard,
A thousand thoughts in Edmund stirred.
In peasant life he might have known
As fair a face, as sweet a tone;
But village notes could ne'er supply
That rich and varied melody,
And ne'er in cottage maid was seen
The easy dignity of mien,
Claiming respect, yet waving state,
That marks the daughters of the great.
Yet not, perchance, had these alone
His scheme of purposed guilt o'erthrown;
But, while her energy of mind
Superior rose to griefs combined,
Lending its kindling to her eye,
Giving her form new majesty,—
To Edmund's thought Matilda seemed
The very object he had dreamed,
When, long ere guilt his soul had known,
In Winston bowers he mused alone,
Taxing his fancy to combine
The face, the air, the voice divine,
Of princess fair, by cruel fate*
Reft of her honours, power, and state,
Till to her rightful realm restored
By destined hero's conquering sword.

XXVI.

"Such was my vision!" Edmund thought;
"And have I, then, the ruin wrought

* Instead of these last four lines, the first edition reads:—

"Of some fair princess of romance,
Who claims the aid of hero's lance."

Of such a maid, that fancy ne'er
In fairest vision formed her peer?
Was it my hand that could unclose
The postern to her ruthless foes?
Foes, lost to honour, law, and faith,
Their kindest mercy sudden death!
Have I done this? I! who have swore,
That if the globe such angel bore,
I would have traced its circle broad,
To kiss the ground on which she trod!—
And now—O! would that earth would rive,
And close upon me while alive!—
Is there no hope? Is all then lost?—
Bertram's already on his post!
Even now, beside the hall's arched door,
I saw his shadow cross the floor!
He was to wait my signal strain—
A little respite thus we gain:—
By what I heard the menials say,
Young Wycliffe's troop are on their way—
Alarm precipitates the crime!
My harp must wear away the time."—
And then, in accents faint and low
He faltered forth a tale of woe.

XXVII.

BALLAD.

"And whither would you lead me, then?"
Quoth the Friar of orders grey;
And the ruffians twain replied again,
"By a dying woman to pray."—

"I see," he said, "a lovely sight,
A sight bodes little harm,
A lady as a lily bright,
With an infant on her arm."—

"Then do thine office, Friar grey,
And see thou shrive her free!
Else shall the sprite, that parts to-night,
Fling all its guilt on thee.

"Let mass be said, and trentals* read,
When thou'rt to convent gone,
And bid the bell of St. Benedict
Toll out its deepest tone."—

The shrift is done, the Friar is gone,
Blindfolded as he came—
Next morning, all in Littlecote Hall†
Were weeping for their dame.

* An office for the dead in the Romish Church, which lasts thirty days.—*Crabb.*

† The tradition on which the ballad is founded was supplied by a

Wild Darrell is an altered man,
The village crones can tell;
He looks pale as clay, and strives to pray,
If he hears the convent bell.

If prince or peer cross Darrell's way,
He'll beard him in his pride—
If he meet a Friar of orders grey,
He droops and turns aside.

XXVIII.

"Harper! methinks thy magic lays,"
Matilda said, "can goblins raise!
Well nigh my fancy can discern,
Near the dark porch, a visage stern;
E'en now, in yonder shadowy nook
I see it!—Redmond, Wilfrid, look!—
A human form distinct and clear—
God, for thy mercy!—It draws near!"—
She saw too true. Stride after stride,
The centre of that chamber wide
Fierce Bertram gained; then made a stand,
And, proudly waving with his hand,
Thundered—"Be still, upon your lives!
He bleeds who speaks, he dies who strives."—
Behind their chief, the robber crew
Forth from the darkened portal drew,
In silence—save that echo dread
Returned their heavy measured tread.
The lamp's uncertain lustre gave
Their arms to gleam, their plumes to wave;
File after file in order pass,
Like forms on Banquo's mystic glass.
Then, halting at their leader's sign,
At once they formed and curved their line,
Hemming within its crescent drear
Their victims, like a herd of deer.
Another sign, and to the aim
Levelled at once their muskets came,
As waiting but their chieftain's word,
To make their fatal volley heard.

XXIX.

Back in a heap the menials drew,
Yet, even in mortal terror, true,
Their pale and startled group oppose
Between Matilda and the foes.
"O, haste thee, Wilfrid!" Redmond cried:
"Undo that wicket by thy side!

friend. With the tale of terror thus communicated, the author has combined some circumstances of a similar legend, which was current at Edinburgh during his childhood.

Bear hence Matilda—gain the wood—
The pass may be a while made good—
Thy band, ere this, must sure be nigh—
O speak not—dally not—but fly!"—
While yet the crowd their motions hide,
Through the low wicket door they glide.
Through vaulted passages they wind,
In Gothic intricacy twined;
Wilfrid half led, and half he bore,
Matilda to the postern door,
And safe beneath the forest tree
The Lady stands at liberty.
The moonbeams, the fresh gale's caress,
Renewed suspended consciousness:—
"Where's Redmond?" eagerly she cries:
"Thou answer'st not—he dies! he dies!
And thou hast left him, all bereft
Of mortal aid—with murderers left!—
I know it well—he would not yield
His sword to man—his doom is sealed!
For my scorned life, which thou hast bought
At price of his, I thank thee not."

XXX.

The unjust reproach, the angry look,
The heart of Wilfrid could not brook,
"Lady," he said, "my band so near,
In safety thou mayst rest thee here.
For Redmond's death thou shalt not mourn,
If mine can buy his safe return."—
He turned away—his heart throbbed high,
The tear was bursting from his eye.
The sense of her injustice pressed
Upon the maid's distracted breast,—
"Stay, Wilfrid, stay! all aid is vain!"—
He heard, but turned him not again;
And now he gains the postern door,
Now enters—and is seen no more.

XXXI.

With all the agony that e'er
Was gendered 'twixt suspense and fear,
She watched the line of windows tall,
Whose Gothic lattice lights the hall,
Distinguished by the paly red
The lamps in dim reflection shed,
While all beside in wan moonlight
Each grated casement glimmered white.
No sight of harm, no sound of ill,
It is a deep and midnight still.
Who looked upon the scene had guessed
All in the castle were at rest:

When sudden on the windows shone
A lightning flash, just seen and gone!
A shot is heard—Again the flame
Flashed thick and fast—a volley came!
Then echoed wildly, from within,
Of shout and scream the mingled din.
And weapon-clash and maddening cry
Of those who kill, and those who die!
As filled the hall with sulphurous smoke,
More red, more dark, the death-flash broke,
And forms were on the lattice cast,
That struck, or struggled. as they passed.

XXXII.

What sounds upon the midnight wind
Approach so rapidly behind?
It is, it is the tramp of steeds!
Matilda hears the sound, she speeds,
Seizes upon the leader's rein—
"O haste to aid, ere aid be vain!
Fly to the postern—gain the hall!"—
From saddle spring the troopers all;
Their gallant steeds, at liberty
Run wild along the moonlight lea.
But, ere they burst upon the scene,
Full stubborn had the conflict been.
When Bertram marked Matilda's flight,
It gave the signal for the fight;
And Rokeby's veterans, seamed with scars
Of Scotland's and of Erin's wars,
Their momentary panic o'er,
Stood to the arms which then they bore;
(For they were weaponed, and prepared
Their mistress on her way to guard.)
Then cheered them to the fight O'Neale,
Then pealed the shot, and clashed the steel;
The war-smoke soon with sable breath
Darkened the scene of blood and death
While on the few defenders close
The Bandits with redoubled blows,
And, twice driven back, yet fierce and fell
Renew the charge with frantic yell.

XXXIII.

Wilfrid has fallen—but o'er him stood
Young Redmond, soiled with smoke and blood,
Cheering his mates, with heart and hand
Still to make good their desperate stand.
"Up, comrades, up! in Rokeby's halls
Ne'er be it said our courage falls.
What! faint ye for their savage cry,
Or do the smoke-wreaths daunt your eye?

These rafters have returned a shout
As loud at Rokeby's wassail rout,
As thick a smoke these hearths have given
At Hallow tide or Christmas even.*
Stand to it yet! renew the fight,
For Rokeby's and Matilda's right!
These slaves! they dare not, hand to hand,
Bide buffet from a true man's brand."—
Impetuous, active, fierce, and young,
Upon the advancing foes he sprung.
Woe to the wretch at whom is bent
His brandished falchion's sheer descent!
Backward they scattered as he came,
Like wolves before the levin flame,
When, 'mid their howling conclave driven,
Hath glanced the thunderbolt of heaven.
Bertram rushed on—but Hartpool clasped
His knees, although in death he gasped,
His falling corpse before him flung,
And round the trammelled ruffian clung.
Just then, the soldiers filled the dome,
And, shouting, charged the felons home
So fiercely, that in panic dread,
They broke, they yielded, fell, or fled.
Bertram's stern voice they heed no more,
Though heard above the battle's roar,
While, trampling down the dying man,
He strove, with volleyed threat and ban,
In scorn of odds, in fate's despite,
To rally up the desperate fight.

XXXIV.

Soon murkier clouds the hall enfold,
Than e'er from battle thunders rolled;
So dense, the combatants scarce know
To aim or to avoid the blow.
Smothering and blindfold grows the fight—
But soon shall dawn a dismal light!
'Mid cries, and clashing arms, there came
The hollow sound of rushing flame;
New horrors on the tumult dire
Arise—the castle is on fire!
Doubtful, if chance had cast the brand,
Or frantic Bertram's desperate hand,
Matilda saw—for frequent broke
From the dim casements gusts of smoke.
Yon tower, which late so clear defined
On the fair hemisphere reclined,

* Such an exhortation was, in similar circumstances, actually given to his followers by a Welsh chieftain. See SIR JOHN WYNNE'S *History of the Gwydir Family*, Lond. 1770, 8vo, p. 116.

That, pencilled on its azure pure,
The eye could count each embrasure,
Now, swathed within the sweeping cloud,
Seems giant-spectre in his shroud;
Till, from each loop-hole flashing light,
A spout of fire shines ruddy bright,
And, gathering to united glare,
Streams high into the midnight air,
A dismal beacon, far and wide.
That wakened Greta's slumbering side.
Soon all beneath, through gallery long
And pendant arch, the fire flashed strong,
Snatching whatever could maintain,
Raise, or extend its furious reign;
Startling, with closer cause of dread,
The females who the conflict fled,
And now rushed forth upon the plain,
Filling the air with clamours vain.

XXXV.

But ceased not yet, the hall within,
The shriek, the shout, the carnage din,
Till bursting lattices give proof
The flames have caught the raftered roof.
What! wait they till its beams amain
Crash on the slayers and the slain?
The alarm is caught, the drawbridge falls,
The warriors hurry from the walls,
But, by the conflagration's light,
Upon the lawn renew the fight.
Each straggling felon down was hewed,
Not one could gain the sheltering wood;
But forth the affrighted Harper sprung,
And to Matilda's robe he clung.
Her shriek, entreaty, and command,
Stopped the pursuer's lifted hand.
Denzil and he alive were ta'en;
The rest, save Bertram, all are slain.

XXXVI.

And where is Bertram?—Soaring high,
The general flame ascends the sky;
In gathered group the soldiers gaze
Upon the broad and roaring blaze,
When, like infernal demon, sent
Red from his penal element,
To plague and to pollute the air,—
His face all gore, on fire his hair,
Forth from the central mass of smoke
The giant form of Bertram broke!
His brandished sword on high he rears,
Then plunged among opposing spears;

Round his left arm his mantle trussed,
Received and foiled three lances' thrust;
Nor these his headlong course withstood,
Like reeds he snapped the tough ash-wood.
In vain his foes around him clung;
With matchless force aside he flung
Their boldest,—as the bull, at bay,
Tosses the ban-dogs from his way.
Through forty foes his path he made,
And safely gained the forest glade.

XXXVII.

Scarce was this final conflict o'er,
When from the postern Redmond bore
Wilfrid, who, as life bereft,
Had in the fatal hall been left,
Deserted there by all his train;
But Redmond saw, and turned again.—
Beneath an oak he laid him down,
That in the blaze gleamed ruddy brown.
And then his mantle's clasp undid;
Matilda held his drooping head,
Till, given to breathe the freer air,
Returning life repaid their care.
He gazed on them with heavy sigh,—
"I could have wished even thus to die!"—
No more he said—for now with speed
Each trooper had regained his steed;
The ready palfreys stood arrayed,
For Redmond and for Rokeby's Maid;
Two Wilfrid on his horse sustain,
One leads his charger by the rein.
But oft Matilda looked behind,
As up the vale of Tees they wind,
Where far the mansion of her sires
Beaconed the dale with midnight fires.
In gloomy arch above them spread,
The clouded heaven lowered bloody red;
Beneath, in sombre light, the flood
Appeared to roll in waves of blood.
Then, one by one, was heard to fall
The tower, the donjon-keep, the hall.
Each rushing down with thundering sound,
A space the conflagration drowned;
Till, gathering strength, again arose,
Announced its triumph in its close,
Shook wide its light the landscape o'er,
Then sunk—and Rokeby was no more!

CANTO SIXTH.

I.

THE summer sun, whose early power
Was wont to gild Matilda's bower,
And rouse her with his matin ray
Her duteous orisons to pay,
That morning sun has three times seen
The flowers unfold on Rokeby green,
But sees no more the slumbers fly
From fair Matilda's hazel eye;
That morning sun has three times broke
On Rokeby's glades of elm and oak,
But, rising from their sylvan screen,
Marks no grey turret's glance between!
A shapeless mass lie keep and tower,
That, hissing to the morning shower,
Can but with smouldering vapour pay
The early smile of summer day.
The peasant, to his labour bound,
Pauses to view the blackened mound,
Striving, amid the ruined space,
Each well-remembered spot to trace.
That length of frail and fire-scorched wall
Once screened the hospitable hall;
When yonder broken arch was whole,
'Twas there was dealt the weekly dole;*
And where yon tottering columns nod,
The chapel sent the hymn to God.
So flits the world's uncertain span!
Nor zeal for God, nor love for man,
Gives mortal monuments a date
Beyond the power of Time and Fate.
The towers must share the builders doom;
Ruin is theirs, and his a tomb:
But better boon benignant Heaven
To Faith and Charity has given,
And bids the Christian hope sublime
Transcend the bounds of Fate and Time.

II.

Now the third night of summer came,
Since that which witnessed Rokeby's flame.
On Brignal cliffs and Scargill brake
The owlet's homilies awake,
The bittern screamed rush and flag,
The raven slumbered on his crag,

* Bread distributed to the poor.

"The summer sun, whose early power
Was wont to gild Matilda's bower,"

Scott. *Rokeby—Canto VI.*—Page 474.

Forth from his den the otter drew,—
Grayling and trout their tyrant knew,
As between reed and sedge he peers,
With fierce round snout and sharpened ears.
Or, prowling by the moonbeam cool,
Watches the stream or swims the pool;—
Perched on his wonted eyrie high,
Sleep sealed the tercelet's* wearied eye,
That all the day had watched so well,
The cushat dart across the dell.
In dubious beam reflected shone
That lofty cliff of pale grey stone,
Beside whose base the secret cave
To rapine late a refuge gave.
The crag's wild crest of copse and yew
On Greta's breast dark shadows threw;
Shadows that met or shunned the sight,
With every change of fitful light;
As hope and fear alternate chase
Our course through life's uncertain race.

III.

Gliding by crag and copsewood green,
A solitary Form was seen
To trace with stealthy pace the wold,
Like fox that seeks the midnight fold,
And pauses oft, and cowers dismayed,
At every breath that stirs the shade.
He passes now the ivy bush,
The owl has seen him, and is hush;
He passes now the doddered† oak,
He heard the startled raven croak;
Lower and lower he descends,
Rustle the leaves, the brushwood bends;
The otter hears him tread the shore,
And dives, and is beheld no more;
And by the cliff of pale grey stone,
The midnight wanderer stands alone.
Methinks, that by the moon we trace
A well-remembered form and face!
That stripling shape, that cheek so pale,
Combine to tell a rueful tale,
Of powers misused, of passion's force,
Of guilt, of grief, and of remorse!
'Tis Edmund's eye, at every sound
That flings that guilty glance around;
'Tis Edmund's trembling haste divides
The brushwood that the cavern hides,
And, when its narrow porch lies bare,
'Tis Edmund's form that enters there.

* The male goss hawk. † Covered with woodbine.

IV.

His flint and steel have sparkled bright,
A lamp hath lent the cavern light.
Fearful and quick his eye surveys
Each angle of the gloomy maze.
Since last he left that stern abode,
It seemed as none its floor had trode;
Untouched appeared the various spoil,
The purchase of his comrade's toil;
Masks and disguises grimed with mud,
Arms broken and defiled with blood,
And all the nameless tools that aid
Night-felons in their lawless trade,
Upon the gloomy walls were hung,
Or lay in nooks obscurely flung.
Still on the sordid board appear
The relics of the noontide cheer;
Flagons and empty flasks were there,
And bench o'erthrown, and shattered chair;
And all around the semblance showed,
As when the final revel glowed,
When the red sun was setting fast,
And parting pledge Guy Denzil passed.
To Rokeby treasure-vaults! they quaffed,
And shouted loud and wildly laughed,
Poured maddening from the rocky door,
And parted—to return no more!
They found in Rokeby vaults their doom,—
A bloody death, a burning tomb.

V.

There his own peasant dress he spies,
Doffed to assume that faint disguise,
And shuddering thought upon his glee,
When pranked in garb of minstrelsy.
"O, be the fatal art accursed,"
He cried, "that moved my folly first,
Till, bribed by bandits' base applause,
I burst through God's and Nature's laws!
Three summer days are scantly passed
Since I have trod this cavern last,
A thoughtless wretch, and prompt to err—
But, O, as yet no murderer!
Even now I list my comrades' cheer,
That general laugh is in mine ear,
Which raised my pulse and steeled my heart,
As I rehearsed my treacherous part—
And would that all since then could seem
The phantom of a fever's dream!
But fatal Memory notes too well
The horrors of the dying yell,

From my despairing mates* that broke,
When flashed the fire and rolled the smoke,
When the avengers shouting came,
And hemmed us 'twixt the sword and flame!
My frantic flight—the lifted brand—
That angel's interposing hand!——
If for my life from slaughter freed,
I yet could pay some grateful meed!—
Perchance this object of my quest
May aid"—he turned, nor spoke the rest.

VI.

Due northward from the rugged hearth,
With paces five he metes the earth,
Then toiled with mattock to explore
The entrails of the cavern floor,
Nor paused till, deep beneath the ground,
His search a small steel casket found.
Just as he stooped to loose its hasp,
His shoulder felt a giant grasp;
He started, and looked up aghast,
Then shrieked!—'twas Bertram held him fast.
"Fear not!" he said; but who could hear
That deep stern voice, and cease to fear?
"Fear not!—by heaven he shakes as much
As partridge in the falcon's clutch!"—
He raised him, and unloosed his hold,
While from the opening casket rolled
A chain and reliquaire of gold.
Bertram beheld it with surprise,
Gazed on its fashion and device,
Then, cheering Edmund as he could,
Somewhat he smoothed his rugged mood;
For still the youth's half-lifted eye
Quivered with terror's agony,
And sidelong glanced, as to explore,
In meditated flight, the door.
"Sit," Bertram said, "from danger free;
Thou canst not, and thou shalt not, flee.
Chance brings me hither; hill and plain
I've sought for refuge-place in vain.
And tell me now, thou aguish boy,
What makest thou here? what means this toy?
Denzil and thou, I marked, were ta'en;
What lucky chance unbound your chain?
I deemed, long since on Baliol's tower,
Your heads were warped with sun and shower.
Tell me the whole—and, mark! nought e'er
Chafes me like falsehood, or like fear."—
Gathering his courage to his aid,
But trembling still, the youth obeyed.

* First edition, "That from my desperate comrades broke."

VII.

"Denzil and I two nights passed o'er
In fetters on the dungeon floor.
A guest the third sad morrow brought;
Our hold dark Oswald Wycliffe sought,
And eyed my comrade long askance,
With fixed and penetrating glance.
'Guy Denzil art thou called?'—'The same.'—
'At Court who served wild Buckinghame;
Thence banished, won a keeper's place,
So Villiers willed, in Marwood-chase;
That lost—I need not tell thee why—
Thou madest thy wit thy wants supply,
Then fought for Rokeby:—have I guessed
My prisoner right?'—'At thy behest.'—
He paused a while, and then went on
With low and confidential tone;
Me, as I judge, not then he saw,
Close nestled in my couch of straw.—
'List to me, Guy. Thou know'st the great
Have frequent need of what they hate;
Hence, in their favour oft we see
Unscrupled, useful men like thee.
Were I disposed to bid thee live,
What pledge of faith hast thou to give?'—

VIII.

"The ready fiend, who never yet
Hath failed to sharpen Denzil's wit,
Prompted his lie—'His only child
Should rest his pledge.'—The Baron smiled,
And turned to me—'Thou art his son?'
I bowed—our fetters were undone,
And we were led to hear apart
A dreadful lesson of his art.
Wilfrid, he said, his heir and son,
Had fair Matilda's favour won;
And long since had their union been,
But for her father's bigot spleen,
Whose brute and blindfold party rage
Would, force per force, her hand engage
To a base kerne of Irish earth,
Unknown his lineage and his birth,
Save that a dying ruffian bore
The infant brat to Rokeby door.
Gentle restraint, he said, would lead
Old Rokeby to enlarge his creed;
But fair occasion he must find
For such restraint well-meant and kind,
The knight being rendered to his charge
But as a prisoner at large.

IX.

"He schooled us in a well-forged tale,
Of scheme the castle walls to scale,
To which was leagued each cavalier
That dwells upon the Tyne and Wear;
That Rokeby, his parole forgot,
Had dealt with us to aid the plot.
Such was the charge which Denzil's zeal
Of hate to Rokeby and O'Neale
Proffered, as witness, to make good,
Even though the forfeit were their blood.
I scrupled, until o'er and o'er
His prisoners' safety Wycliffe swore,
And then—alas! what needs there more?
I knew I should not live to say
The proffer I refused that day;
Ashamed to live, yet loth to die,
I soiled me with their infamy!"
"Poor youth," said Bertram, "wavering still
Unfit alike for good or ill!
But what fell next?"—"Soon as at large
Was scrolled and signed our fatal charge,
There never yet, on tragic stage,
Was seen so well a painted rage
As Oswald's showed! with loud alarm
He called his garrison to arm;
From tower to tower, from post to post,
He hurried as if all were lost;
Consigned to dungeon and to chain
The good old knight and all his train;
Warned each suspected cavalier,
Within his limits, to appear
To-morrow, at the hour of noon,
In the high church of Eglistone."—

X.

"Of Eglistone! even now I passed,"
Said Bertram, "as the night closed fast;
Torches and cressets gleamed around,
I heard the saw and hammer sound,
And I could mark they toiled to raise
A scaffold, hung with sable baize,
Which the grim headsman's scene displayed,
Block, axe, and sawdust, ready laid.
Some evil deed will there be done,
Unless Matida wed his son.—
She loves him not—'tis shrewdly guessed
That Redmond rules the damsel's breast.
This is a turn of Oswald's skill;
But I may meet and foil him still!——
How camest thou to thy freedom?"—"There
Lies mystery more dark and rare.

In midst of Wycliffe's well-feigned rage,
A scroll was offered by a page,
Who told, a muffled horseman late
Had left it at the castle gate.
He broke the seal—his cheek showed change,
Sudden, portentous, wild, and strange;
The mimic passion of his eye
Was turned to actual agony,
His hand like summer sapling shook,
Terror and guilt were in his look.
Denzil he judged, in time of need,
Fit counsellor for evil deed,
And thus apart his counsel broke,
While with a ghastly smile he spoke:—

XI.

"'As in the pageants of the stage,
The dead awake in this wild age,
Mortham,—whom all men deemed decreed
In his own deadly snare to bleed,
Slain by a bravo, whom, o'er sea,
He trained to aid in murdering me,—
Mortham has 'scaped; the coward shot
The steed, but harmed the rider not.'"—
Here, with an execration fell,
Bertram leaped up, and paced the cell;—
"Thine own grey head, or bosom dark,"
He muttered, "may be surer mark!"—
Then sat, and signed to Edmund, pale
With terror, to resume his tale.
"Wycliffe went on:—'Mark with what flights
Of wildered reverie he writes:

THE LETTER.

"'Ruler of Mortham's destiny!
Though dead, thy victim lives to thee.
Once had he all that binds to life,
A lovely child, a lovelier wife;
Wealth, fame, and friendship, were his own—
Thou gavest the word, and they are flown.
Mark how he pays thee:—to thy hand
He yields his honours and his land,
One boon premised;—Restore his child!
And, from his native land exiled,
Mortham no more returns to claim
His lands, his honours, or his name;
Refuse him this, and from the slain
Thou shalt see Mortham rise again.'—

XII.

"This billet while the Baron read,
His faltering accents showed his dread;

He pressed his forehead with his palm,
Then took a scornful tone and calm;
'Wild as the winds, as billows wild!
What wot I of his spouse or child?
Hither he brought a joyous dame,
Unknown her lineage or her name:
Her, in some frantic fit, he slew;
The nurse and child in fear withdrew.
Heaven be my witness! wist I where
To find this youth, my kinsman's heir,—
Unguerdoned, I would give with joy
The father's arms to fold his boy,
And Mortham's lands and towers resign
To the just heirs of Mortham's line.'—
Thou know'st that scarcely e'en his fear
Suppresses Denzil's cynic sneer;—
'Then happy is thy vassal's part,'
He said, 'to ease his patron's heart!
In thine own jailer's watchful care
Lies Mortham's just and rightful heir;
Thy generous wish is fully won,—
Redmond O'Neale is Mortham's son.'—

XIII.

"Up starting with a frenzied look,
His clenchèd hand the Baron shook:
'Is Hell at work? or dost thou rave,
Or darest thou palter with me, slave!
Perchance thou wotest not, Barnard's towers
Have racks, of strange and ghastly powers.'—
Denzil, who well his safety knew,
Firmly rejoined, 'I tell thee true.
Thy racks could give thee but to know
The proofs, which I, untortured, show.—
It chanced upon a winter night,
When early snow made Stanmore white,
That very night, when first of all
Redmond O'Neale saw Rokeby-hall,
It was my goodly lot to gain
A reliquary and a chain,
Twisted and chased of massive gold.
Demand not how the prize I hold!
It was not given, nor lent, nor sold.—
Gilt tablets to the chain were hung,
With letters in the Irish tongue.
I hid my spoil, for there was need
That I should leave the land with speed;
Nor then I deemed it safe to bear
On mine own person gems so rare.
Small heed I of the tablets took,
But since have spelled them by the book,

When some sojourn in Erin's land
Of their wild speech had given command.
But darkling was the sense; the phrase
And language those of other days,
Involved of purpose, as to foil
An interloper's prying toil.
The words, but not the sense, I knew,
Till fortune gave the guiding clue.

XIV.

"'Three days since was that clue revealed
In Thorsgill as I lay concealed,
And heard at full when Rokeby's Maid
Her uncle's history displayed;
And now I can interpret well
Each syllable the tablets tell.
Mark, then: Fair Edith was the joy
Of old O'Neale of Clandeboy,
But from her sire and country fled,
In secret Mortham's Lord to wed.
O'Neale, his first resentment o'er,
Despatched his son to Greta's shore,
Enjoining he should make him known
(Until his farther will were shown,)
To Edith, but to her alone.
What of their ill-starred meeting fell,
Lord Wycliffe knows, and none so well.

XV.

"'O'Neale it was, who, in despair,
Robbed Mortham of his infant heir;
He bred him in their nurture wild,
And called him murdered Connal's child.
Soon died the nurse; the clan believed
What from their chieftain they received.
His purpose was, that ne'er again
The boy should cross the Irish main,
But, like his mountain sires, enjoy
The woods and wastes of Clandeboy.
Then on the land wild troubles came
And stronger chieftains urged a claim,
And wrested from the old man's hands
His native towers, his father's lands.
Unable then, amid the strife,
To guard young Redmond's rights or life,
Late and reluctant he restores
The infant to his native shores,
With goodly gifts and letters stored,
With many a deep conjuring word,
To Mortham and to Rokeby's Lord.
Nought knew the clod of Irish earth!
Who was the guide, of Redmond's birth;

But deemed his chief's commands were laid
On both, by both to be obeyed.
How he was wounded by the way.
I need not, and I list not say.'—

XVI.

"'A wondrous tale! and, grant it true,
What,' Wycliffe answered, 'might I do?
Heaven knows, as willingly as now
I raise the bonnet from my brow,
Would I my kinsman's manors fair
Restore to Mortham, or his heir;
But Mortham is distraught—O'Neale
Has drawn for tyranny his steel,
Malignant to our rightful Cause,
And trained in Rome's delusive laws.
Hark thee apart!'—They whispered long
Till Denzil's voice grew bold and strong:—
'My proofs! I never will,' he said,
'Show mortal man where they are laid.
Nor hope discovery to foreclose,
By giving me to feed the crows;
For I have mates at large, who know
Where I am wont such toys to stow.
Free me from peril and from band,
These tablets are at thy command;
Nor were it hard to form some train,
To wile old Mortham o'er the main.
Then, lunatic's nor papist's hand
Should wrest from thine the goodly land.'—
—'I like thy wit,' said Wycliffe, 'well;
But here in hostage shalt thou dwell.
Thy son, unless my purpose err,
May prove the trustier messenger.
A scroll to Mortham shall he bear
From me, and fetch these tokens rare.
Gold shalt thou have, and that good store,
And freedom, his commission o'er;
But if his faith should chance to fail,
The gibbet frees thee from the jail.'—

XVII.

"Meshed in the net himself had twined,
What subterfuge could Denzil find?
He told me, with reluctant sigh,
That hidden here the tokens lie;
Conjured my swift return and aid,
By all he scoffed and disobeyed;
And looked as if the noose were tied,
And I the priest who left his side.
This scroll for Mortham, Wycliffe gave,
Whom I must seek by Greta's wave:

Or in the hut where chief he hides,
Where Thorsgill's forester resides,
(Thence chanced it, wandering in the glade,
That he descried our ambuscade.)
I was dismissed as evening fell,
And reached but now this rocky cell."—
"Give Oswald's letter."—Bertram read,
And tore it fiercely, shred by shred:—
"All lies and villany! to blind
His noble kinsman's generous mind,
And train him on from day to day,
Till he can take his life away.—
And now, declare thy purpose, youth,
Nor dare to answer, save the truth;
If aught I mark of Denzil's art,
I'll tear the secret from thy heart!"—

XVIII.

"It needs not. I renounce," he said,
"My tutor and his deadly trade.
Fixed was my purpose to declare
To Mortham, Redmond is his heir;
To tell him in what risk he stands,
And yield these tokens to his hands.
Fixed was my purpose to atone,
Far as I may, the evil done,
And fixed it rests—if I survive,
This night, and leave this cave alive."—
"And Denzil?"—"Let them ply the rack,
Even till his joints and sinews crack!
If Oswald tear him limb from limb,
What truth can Denzil claim from him,
Whose thoughtless youth he led astray,
And damned to this unhallowed way?
He schooled me, faith and vows were vain;
Now let my master reap his gain."—
"True," answered Bertram, "'tis his meed;
There's retribution in the deed.
But thou—thou art not for our course,
Hast fear, hast pity, hast remorse;
And he, with us the gale who braves,
Must heave such cargo to the waves,
Or lag with overloaded prore,
While barks unburdened reach the shore."—

XIX.

He paused, and, stretching him at length,
Seemed to repose his bulky strength.
Communing with his secret mind,
As half he sat, and half reclined,
One ample hand his forehead pressed,
And one was dropped across his breast,
The shaggy eyebrows deeper came
Above his eyes of swarthy flame;

His lip of pride awhile forbore
The haughty curve till then it wore;
The unaltered fierceness of his look
A shade of darkened sadness took,—
For dark and sad a presage pressed
Resistlessly on Bertram's breast,—
And when he spoke, his wonted tone,
So fierce, abrupt, and brief, was gone.
His voice was steady, low, and deep,
Like distant waves when breezes sleep;
And sorrow mixed with Edmund's fear,
Its low unbroken depth to hear.

XX.

"Edmund, in thy sad tale I find
The woe that warped my patron's mind;
'Twould wake the fountains of the eye
In other men, but mine are dry.
Mortham must never see the fool,
That sold himself base Wycliffe's tool!
Yet less from thirst of sordid gain,
Than to avenge supposed disdain.
Say, Bertram rues his faults;—a word,
Till now, from Bertram never heard:
Say, too, that Mortham's lord he prays
To think but on their former days;
On Quariana's beach and rock,
On Cayo's bursting battle-shock,
On Darien's sands and deadly dew,
And on the dart Tlatzeca threw;—
Perchance my patron yet may hear
More than may grace his comrade's bier.
My soul hath felt a secret weight,
A warning of approaching fate:
A priest had said, 'Return, repent!'
As well to bid that rock be rent.
Firm as that flint I face mine end;
My heart may burst, but cannot bend.

XXI.

"The dawning of my youth, with awe
And prophecy, the Dalesmen saw;
For over Redesdale it came,
As bodeful as their beacon-flame.
Edmund, thy years were scarcely mine,
When, challenging the Clans of Tyne
To bring their best my brand to prove,
O'er Hexham's altar hung my glove;*
But Tynedale, nor in tower nor town,
Held champion meet to take it down.

* This custom among the Redesdale and Tynedale Borderers is mentioned in the interesting Life of Bernard Gilpin, where some account is given of these wild districts, which it was the custom of that excellent man regularly to visit.

My noontide, India may declare;
Like her fierce Sun, I fired the air!
Like him, to wood and cave bade fly
Her natives, from mine angry eye.
Panama's maids shall long look pale
When Risingham inspires the tale;
Chili's dark matrons long shall tame
The froward child with Bertram's name.
And now, my race of terror run,
Mine be the eve of tropic Sun!
No pale gradations quench his ray,
No twilight dews his wrath allay;
With disk like battle-target red,
He rushes to his burning bed,
Dyes the wide wave with bloody light,
Then sinks at once—and all is night.

XXII.

"Now to thy mission, Edmund. Fly,
Seek Mortham out, and bid him hie
To Richmond, where his troops are laid,
And lead his force to Redmond's aid.
Say, till he reaches Eglistone,
A friend will watch to guard his son.
Now, fare thee well; for night draws on,
And I would rest me here alone."—
Despite his ill dissembled fear,
There swam in Edmund's eye a tear;
A tribute to the courage high,
Which stooped not in extremity,
But strove, irregularly great,
To triumph o'er approaching fate!
Bertram beheld the dew-drop start,
It almost touched his iron heart:—
"I did not think there lived," he said,
"One, who would tear for Bertram shed."—
He loosened then his baldric's hold,
A buckle broad of massive gold;—
"Of all the spoil that paid his pains,
But this with Risingham remains:
And this, dear Edmund, thou shalt take,
And wear it long for Bertram's sake,
Once more—to Mortham speed amain;
Farewell! and turn thee not again."—

XXIII.

The night has yielded to the morn,
And far the hours of prime are worn,
Oswald, who, since the dawn of day,
Had cursed his messenger's delay,
Impatient questioned now his train,
"Was Denzil's son returned again?"—

It chanced there answered of the crew,
A menial, who young Edmund knew:
"No son of Denzil this," he said;
"A peasant boy from Winston glade,
For song and minstrelsy renowned,
And knavish pranks, the hamlets round."—
—"Not Denzil's son!—from Winston vale!—
Then it was false, that specious tale;
Or, worse—he hath despatched the youth
To show to Mortham's lord its truth.
Fool that I was!—but 'tis too late;—
This is the very turn of fate!—
The tale, or true or false, relies
On Denzil's evidence:—He dies!—
—Ho! Provost Marshal! instantly
Lead Denzil to the gallows-tree!
Allow him not a parting word;
Short be the shrift, and sure the cord!
Then let his gory head appal
Marauders from the castle-wall.
Lead forth thy guard, that duty done,
With best despatch to Eglistone.—
—Basil, tell Wilfrid he must straight
Attend me at the castle-gate."—

XXIV.

"Alas!" the old domestic said,
And shook his venerable head,
"Alas, my Lord! full ill to-day
May my young master brook the way!
The leech has spoke with grave alarm,
Of unseen hurt, of secret harm,
Of sorrow lurking at the heart,
That mars and lets* his healing art."—
—"Tush, tell not me!—Romantic boys
Pine themselves sick for airy toys.
I will find cure for Wilfrid soon;
Bid him for Eglistone be boune,†
And quick—I hear the dull death-drum
Tell Denzil's hour of fate is come."—
He paused with scornful smile, and then
Resumed his train of thought agen.
"Now comes my fortune's crisis near!
Entreaty boots not—instant fear,
Nought else, can bend Matilda's pride,
Or win her to be Wilfrid's bride.
But when she sees the scaffold placed,
With axe and block and headsman graced,
And when she deems, that to deny
Dooms Redmond and her sire to die,

*Hinders. †Made ready.

She must give way.—Then, were the line
Of Rokeby once combined with mine,
I gain the weather-gage of fate!
If Mortham come, he comes too late,
While I, allied thus and prepared,
Bid him defiance to his beard.—
—If she prove stubborn, shall I dare
To drop the axe?—soft! pause we there.
Mortham still lives—yon youth may tell
His tale—and Fairfax loves him well;—
Else, wherefore should I now delay
To sweep this Redmond from my way?—
But she to piety perforce
Must yield.—Without there! Sound to horse."—

XXV.

'Twas bustle in the court below.—
"Mount, and march forward!"—forth they go;
Steeds neigh and trample all around,
Steel rings, spears glimmer, trumpets sound.—
Just then was sung his parting hymn;
And Denzil turned his eyeballs dim,
And scarcely conscious what he sees,
Follows the horsemen down the Tees,
And scarcely conscious what he hears,
The trumpets tingle in his ears.
O'er the long bridge they're sweeping now,
The van is hid by greenwood bough;
But ere the rearward had passed o'er,
Guy Denzil heard and saw no more!
One stroke, upon the castle bell,
To Oswald rung his dying knell.

XXVI.

O for that pencil, erst profuse
Of chivalry's emblazoned hues,
That traced of old, in Woodstocke bower,
The pageant of the Leaf and Flower,
And bodied forth the tourney high,
Held for the hand of Emily!
Then might I paint the tumult broad,
That to the crowded abbey flowed,
And poured, as with an ocean's sound,
Into the church's ample bound!
Then might I show each varying mien,
Exulting, woeful, or serene;
Indifference with his idiot stare,
And Sympathy with anxious air;
Paint the dejected Cavalier,
Doubtful, disarmed, and sad of cheer;
And his proud foe, whose formal eye
Claimed conquest now and mastery;

And the brute crowd, whose envious zeal
Huzzas each turn of Fortune's wheel,
And loudest shouts when lowest lie
Exalted worth and station high.
Yet what may such a wish avail?
'Tis mine to tell an onward tale,
Hurrying, as best I can, along,
The hearers and the hasty song;—
Like traveller when approaching home,
Who sees the shades of evening come,
And must not now his course delay,
Or choose the fair, but winding way;
Nay, scarcely may his pace suspend,
Where o'er his head the wildings bend,
To bless the breeze that cools his brow,
Or snatch a blossom from the bough.

XXVII.

The reverend pile lay wild and waste,
Profaned, dishonoured, and defaced.
Through storied lattices no more
In softened light the sunbeams pour,
Gilding the Gothic sculpture rich
Of shrine, and monument, and niche.
The Civil fury of the time
Made sport of sacrilegious crime;
For dark Fanaticism rent
Altar, and screen, and ornament,
And peasant hands the tombs o'erthrew
Of Bowes, of Rokeby, and Fitz-Hugh.
And now was seen unwonted sight,
In holy walls a scaffold dight!
Where once the priest, of grace divine
Dealt to his flock the mystic sign,
There stood the block displayed, and there
The headsman grim his hatchet bare;
And for the word of Hope and Faith,
Resounded loud a doom of death.
Thrice the fierce trumpet's breath was heard,
And echoed thrice the herald's word,
Dooming, for breach of martial laws,
And treason to the Commons' cause,
The Knight of Rokeby and O'Neale
To stoop their heads to block and steel.
The trumpets flourished high and shrill,
Then was a silence dead and still;
And silent prayers to heaven were cast,
And stifled sobs were bursting fast,
Till from the crowd began to rise
Murmurs of sorrow or surprise,
And from the distant aisles there came
Deep-muttered threats, with Wycliffe's name.

XXVIII.

But Oswald, guarded by his band,
Powerful in evil, waved his hand,
And bade Sedition's voice be dead,
On peril of the murmurer's head.
Then first his glance sought Rokeby's Knight;
Who gazed on the tremendous sight,
As calm as if he came a guest
To kindred Baron's feudal feast,
As calm as if that trumpet-call
Were summons to the bannered hall;
Firm in his loyalty he stood,
And prompt to seal it with his blood.
With downcast look drew Oswald nigh,—
He durst not cope with Rokeby's eye!—
And said, with low and faltering breath,
"Thou know'st the terms of life and death."—
The Knight then turned, and sternly smiled;
"The maiden is mine only child,
Yet shall my blessing leave her head,
If with a traitor's son she wed."—
Then Redmond spoke; "The life of one
Might thy malignity atone,
On me be flung a double guilt!
Spare Rokeby's blood, let mine be spilt!"—
Wycliffe had listened to his suit,
But dread prevailed, and he was mute.

XXIX.

And now he pours his choice of fear
In secret on Matilda's ear;
"An union formed with me and mine,
Ensures the faith of Rokeby's line.
Consent, and all this dread array,
Like morning dream shall pass away;
Refuse, and, by my duty pressed,
I give the word—thou know'st the rest."—
Matilda, still and motionless,
With terror heard the dread address,
Pale as the sheeted maid who dies
To hopeless love a sacrifice;
Then wrung her hands in agony,
And round her cast bewildered eye,
Now on the scaffold glanced, and now
On Wycliffe's unrelenting brow.
She veiled her face, and, with a voice
Scarce audible,—"I make my choice!
Spare but their lives!—for aught beside,
Let Wilfrid's doom my fate decide.
He once was generous!"—As she spoke,
Dark Wycliffe's joy in triumph broke:—

"Wilfrid, where loitered ye so late?—
Why upon Basil rest thy weight?
Art spell-bound by enchanter's wand?—
Kneel, kneel, and take her yielded hand;
Thank her with raptures, simple boy!
Should tears and trembling speak thy joy?"—
"O hush my sire! to prayer and tear
Of mine thou hast refused thine ear;
But now the awful hour draws on,
When truth must speak in loftier tone."—

XXX.

He took Matilda's hand:—"Dear maid,
Couldst thou so injure me," he said,
"Of thy poor friend so basely deem,
As blend him with this barbarous scheme?
Alas! my efforts, made in vain,
Might well have saved this added pain.
But now, bear witness earth and heaven,
That ne'er was hope to mortal given,
So twisted with the strings of life,
As this—to call Matilda wife!
I bid it now forever part,
And with the effort bursts my heart."—
His feeble frame was worn so low,
With wounds, with watching, and with woe,
That nature could no more sustain
The agony of mental pain.
He kneeled—his lip her hand had pressed,—
Just then he felt the stern arrest;
Lower and lower sunk his head,—
They raised him,—but the life was fled!
Then first alarmed, his sire and train
Tried every aid, but tried in vain.
The soul, too soft its ills to bear,
Had left our mortal hemisphere,
Had sought in better world the meed,
To blameless life by Heaven decreed.

XXXI.

The wretched sire beheld, aghast,
With Wilfrid all his projects passed,
All turned and centred on his son,
On Wilfrid all—and he was gone.
"And am I childless now," he said,
"Childless, through that relentless maid!
A lifetime's arts, in vain essayed,
Are bursting on their artist's head!—
Here lies my Wilfrid dead—and there
Comes hated Mortham for his heir,
Eager to knit in happy band
With Rokeby's heiress Redmond's hand.

And shall their triumph soar o'er all
The schemes deep-laid to work their fall?
No!—deeds, which prudence might not dare,
Appal not vengeance and despair.
The murderess weeps upon his bier—
I'll change to real that feignèd tear!
They all shall share destruction's shock;—
Ho! lead the captives to the block!"—
But ill his provost could divine
His feelings, and forbore the sign.
"Slave! to the block!—or I, or they,
Shall face the judgment-seat this day!"—

XXXII.

The outmost crowd have heard a sound,
Like horse's hoof on hardened ground;
Nearer it came, and yet more near,—
The very deaths-men paused to hear.
'Tis in the churchyard now—the tread
Hath waked the dwelling of the dead!
Fresh sod, and old sepulchral stone,
Return the tramp in varied tone,
All eyes upon the gateway hung,
When through the Gothic arch there sprung
A Horseman armed, at headlong speed,*—
Sable his cloak, his plume, his steed.
Fire from the flinty floor was spurned,
The vaults unwonted clang returned!—
One instant's glance around he threw,
From saddlebow his pistol drew.
Grimly determined was his look!
His charger with the spurs he strook—
All scattered backward as he came,
For all knew Bertram Risingham!
Three bounds that noble courser gave;
The first has reached the central nave,
The second cleared the chancel wide,
The third,—he was at Wycliffe's side.
Full levelled at the Baron's head,
Rung the report—the bullet sped—
And to his long account, and last,
Without a groan dark Oswald passed!
All was so quick, that it might seem
A flash of lightning, or a dream.

XXXIII.

While yet the smoke the deed conceals,
Bertram his ready charger wheels;

* This, and what follows, is taken from a real achievement of Major Robert Philipson, called, from his desperate and adventurous courage, Robin the Devil.

But floundered on the pavement floor
The steed, and down the rider bore,
And, bursting in the headlong sway,
The faithless saddle-girths gave way.
'Twas while he toiled him to be freed,
And with the rein to raise the steed,
That from amazement's iron trance
All Wycliffe's soldiers waked at once.
Sword, halbert, musket-butt, their blows
Hailed upon Bertram as he rose;
A score of pikes, with each a wound,
Bore down and pinned him to the ground;
But still his struggling force he rears,
'Gainst hacking brands and stabbing spears;
Thrice from assailants shook him free,
Once gained his feet, and twice his knee.
By tenfold odds oppressed at length,
Despite his struggles and his strength,
He took a hundred mortal wounds,
As mute as fox 'mongst mangling hounds;
And when he died, his parting groan
Had more of laughter than of moan!
—They gazed, as when a lion dies,
And hunters scarcely trust their eyes,
But bend their weapons on the slain,
Lest the grim king should rouse again!—
Then blow and insult some renewed,
And from the trunk the head had hewed,
But Basil's voice the deed forbade;
A mantle o'er the corse he laid:—
"Fell as he was in act and mind,
He left no bolder heart behind:
Then give him, for a soldier meet,
A soldier's cloak for winding sheet."—

XXXIV.

No more of death and dying pang,
No more of trump and bugle-clang,
Though through the sounding woods there come
Banner and bugle, trump and drum.
Armed with such powers as well had freed
Young Redmond at his utmost need,
And backed with such a band of horse,
As might less ample powers enforce;
Possessed of every proof and sign
That gave an heir to Mortham's line,
And yielded to a father's arms
An image of his Edith's charms,—
Mortham is come, to hear and see
Of this strange morn the history.
What saw he?—not the church's floor,
Cumbered with dead and stained with gore;

What heard he?—not the clamorous crowd,
That shout their gratulations loud;
Redmond he saw and heard alone,
Clasped him, and sobbed, "My son, my son!"—

XXXV.

This chanced upon a summer morn,
When yellow waved the heavy corn:
But when brown August o'er the land
Called for the reaper's busy hand,
A gladsome sight the sylvan road
From Eglistone to Mortham showed.
A while the hardy rustic leaves
The task to bind and pile the sheaves,
And maids their sickles fling aside,
To gaze on bridegroom and on bride,
And Childhood's wondering group draws near,
And from the gleaner's hand the ear
Drops, while she holds them for a prayer
And blessing on the lovely pair.
'Twas then the Maid of Rokeby gave
Her plighted troth to Redmond brave;
And Teesdale can remember yet
How Fate to Virtue paid her debt,
And, for their troubles, bade them prove
A lengthened life of peace and love.

Time and Tide had thus their sway
Yielding, like an April day,
Smiling noon for sullen morrow,
Years of joy for hours of sorrow.

THE

BRIDAL OF TRIERMAIN;

OR,

THE VALE OF ST. JOHN.

IN THREE CANTOS.

An elf-quene wol I love I wis,
For in this world no woman is
Worthy to be my make in toun:
All other women I forsake,
And to an elf-quene I me take
By dale and eke by doun.

RIME OF SIR THOPAS.

First published anonymously at Edinburgh in 1819.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

In the *Edinburgh Annual Register* for the year 1809, three Fragments were inserted, written in imitation of Living Poets. It must have been apparent, that by these prolusions, nothing burlesque, or disrespectful to the authors was intended, but that they were offered to the public as serious, though certainly very imperfect, imitations of that style of composition by which each of the writers is supposed to be distinguished. As these exercises attracted a greater degree of attention than the author anticipated, he has been induced to complete one of them, and present it as a separate publication.

It is not in this place that an examination of the works of the master whom he has here adopted as his model, can, with propriety, be introduced; since his general acquiescence in the favorable suffrage of the public must necessarily be inferred from the attempt he has now made. He is induced, by the nature of his subject, to offer a few remarks on what has been called ROMANTIC POETRY;—the popularity of which has been revived in the present day, under the auspices, and by the unparalleled success of one individual.

The original purpose of poetry is either religious or historical, or, as must frequently happen, a mixture of both. To modern readers, the poems of Homer have many of the features of pure romance; but, in the estimation of his contemporaries, they probably derived their chief value from their supposed historical authenticity. The same may be generally said of the poetry of all early ages. The marvels and miracles which the poet blends with his song, do not exceed in number or extravagance the figments of the historians of the same period of society; and, indeed, the difference betwixt poetry and prose, as the vehicles of historical truth, is always of late introduction. Poets, under various denominations of Bards, Scalds, Chroniclers, and so forth, are the first historians of all nations. Their intention is to relate the events they have witnessed, or the traditions that have reached them; and they clothe the relation in rhyme, merely as the means of rendering it more solemn in the narrative, or more easily committed to memory. But as the poetical historian improves in the art of conveying information, the authenticity of his narrative unavoidably declines. He is tempted to dilate and dwell upon the events that are interesting to his imagination, and, conscious how indifferent his audience is to the naked truth of his poem, his history gradually becomes a romance.

It is in this situation that those epics are found, which have been generally regarded the standards of poetry; and it

has happened somewhat strangely, that the moderns have pointed out as the characteristics and peculiar excellencies of narrative poetry, the very circumstances which the authors themselves adopted, only because their art involved the duties of the historian as well as the poet. It cannot be believed, for example, that Homer selected the siege of Troy as the most appropriate subject for poetry; his purpose was to write the early history of his country: the event he has chosen, though not very fruitful in varied incident, nor perfectly well adapted for poetry, was nevertheless combined with traditionary and genealogical anecdotes extremely interesting to those who were to listen to him, and this he has adorned by the exertions of a genius, which, if it has been equalled, has certainly never been surpassed. It was not till comparatively a late period that the general accuracy of his narrative, or his purpose in composing it, was brought into question. *Δοκεῖ πρῶτος (ὁ Ἀναξαγόρας καθά φησι Φαβορῖνος ἐν παντοδαπῇ Ἱστορίᾳ) τὴν Ὁμήρου ποίησιν ἀποφήνασθαι εἶναι περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ δικαιοσύνης.** But whatever theories might be framed by speculative men, his work was of an historical, not of an allegorical nature. *Ἐναντίλλετο μετὰ τοῦ Μέντεω, καὶ ὅπου ἐκάστοτε ἀφίκοιτο, πάντα τὰ ἐπιχώρια διεωρᾶτο, καὶ ἱστορέων ἐπυνθάνετο· εἰκὸς δέ μιν ἦν καὶ μνημοσυνα πάντων γράφεσθαι.*† Instead of recommending the choice of a subject similar to that of Homer, it was to be expected that critics should have exhorted the poets of these later days to adopt or invent a narrative in itself more susceptible of poetical ornament, and to avail themselves of that advantage in order to compensate, in some degree, the inferiority of genius. The contrary course has been inculcated by almost all the writers upon the *Epopœia;* with what success the fate of Homer's numerous imitators may best show. The *ultimum supplicium* of criticism was inflicted on the author if he did not choose a subject which at once deprived him of all claim to originality, and placed him, if not in actual contest, at least in a fatal comparison with those giants in the land, whom it was most his interest to avoid. The celebrated receipt for writing an epic poem, which appeared in the *Guardian*, was the first instance in which common sense was applied to this department of poetry; and indeed, if the question be considered on its own merits, we must be satisfied that narrative poetry, if strictly confined to the great occurrences of history, would be deprived of the individual interest which it is so well calculated to excite.

Modern poets may therefore be pardoned in seeking simpler subjects of verse, more interesting in proportion to their simplicity. Two or three figures, well grouped, suit the artist better than a crowd, for whatever purpose assembled. For the same reason, a scene immediately presented to the imagination, and directly brought home to the feelings, though involving the fate of but one or two persons, is more

* Diogenes Laertius, lib. ii.

† Homeri Vita.

favourable for poetry than the political struggles and convulsions which influence the fate of kingdoms. The former are within the reach and comprehension of all, and if depicted with vigour, seldom fail to fix attention: the other, if more sublime, are more vague and distant, less capable of being distinctly understood, and infinitely less capable of exciting those sentiments which it is the very purpose of poetry to inspire. To generalize is always to destroy effect. We would, for example, be more interested in the fate of an individual soldier in combat, than in the grand events of a general action; with the happiness of two lovers raised from misery and anxiety to peace and union, than with the successful exertions of a whole nation. From what causes this may originate, is a separate and obviously an immaterial consideration. Before ascribing this peculiarity to causes decidedly and odiously selfish, it is proper to recollect, that while men see only a limited space, and while their affections and conduct are regulated, not by aspiring at an universal good, but by exerting their power of making themselves and others happy within the limited scale allotted to each individual, so long will individual history and individual virtue be the readier and more accessible road to general interest and attention; and perhaps we may add, that it is the more useful, as well as the more accessible, inasmuch as it affords an example capable of being easily imitated.

According to the author's idea of Romantic Poetry, as distinguished from Epic, the former comprehends a fictitious narrative, framed and combined at the pleasure of the writer; beginning and ending as he may judge best; which neither exacts nor refuses the use of supernatural machinery; which is free from the technical rules of the *Epee*, and is subject only to those which good sense, good taste, and good morals, apply to every species of poetry without exception. The date may be in a remote age, or in the present; the story may detail the adventures of a prince or of a peasant. In a word, the author is absolute master of his country and its inhabitants, and everything is permitted to him, excepting to be heavy or prosaic, for which, free and unembarrassed as he is, he has no manner of apology. Those, it is probable, will be found the peculiarities of this species of composition: and, before joining the outcry against the vitiated taste that fosters and encourages it, the justice and grounds of it ought to be made perfectly apparent. If the want of sieges and battles and great military evolutions in our poetry is complained of, let us reflect, that the campaigns and heroes of our days are perpetuated in a record that neither requires nor admits of the aid of fiction; and if the complaint refers to the inferiority of our bards, let us pay a just tribute to their modesty, limiting them, as it does, to subjects, which, however indifferently treated, have still the interest and charm of novelty, and which thus prevents them from adding insipidity to their other more insuperable defects.

THE BRIDAL OF TRIERMAIN;

OR,

THE VALE OF SAINT JOHN.

A LOVER'S TALE.

INTRODUCTION.

I.

COME, Lucy! while 'tis morning hour,
The woodland brook we needs must pass;
So, ere the sun assume his power,
We shelter in our poplar bower,
Where dew lies long upon the flower,
Though vanished from the velvet grass.
Curbing the stream, this stony ridge
May serve us for a sylvan bridge;
For here, compelled to disunite,
Round petty isles the runnels glide,
And, chafing off their puny spite,
The shallow murmurers waste their might,
Yielding to footstep free and light
A dry-shod pass from side to side.

II.

Nay, why this hesitating pause?
And, Lucy, as thy step withdraws,
Why sidelong eye the streamlet's brim?
Titania's foot without a slip,
Like thine though timid, light, and slim,
From stone to stone might safely trip,
Nor risk the glow-worm clasp to dip
That binds her slipper's silken rim.
Or trust thy lover's strength; nor fear
That this same stalwart arm of mine,
Which could yon oak's prone trunk uprear,
Shall shrink beneath the burden dear
Of form so slender, light and fine.—
So,—now, the danger dared at last,
Look back, and smile at perils passed!

III.

And now we reach the favourite glade,
Paled in by copsewood, cliff, and stone,

Where never harsher sounds invade,
To break Affection's whispering tone,
Than the deep breeze that waves the shade,
Than the small brooklet's feeble moan:
Come! rest thee on thy wonted seat;
Mossed is the stone, the turf is green,
A place where lovers best may meet,
Who would not that their love be seen.
The boughs, that dim the summer sky,
Shall hide us from each lurking spy,
That fain would spread the invidious tale,
How Lucy of the lofty eye,
Noble in birth, in fortunes high,
She for whom lords and barons sigh,
Meets her poor Arthur in the dale.

IV.

How deep that blush!—how deep that sigh!
And why does Lucy shun mine eye?—
Is it because that crimson draws
Its colour from some secret cause,
Some hidden movement of the breast,
She would not that her Arthur guessed?
O! quicker far is lovers' ken
Than the dull glance of commen men,
And, by strange sympathy, can spell
The thoughts the loved one will not tell!
And mine, in Lucy's blush, saw met
The hues of pleasure and regret;
Pride mingled in the sigh her voice,
And shared with Love the crimson glow,
Well pleased that thou art Arthur's choice,
Yet shame thine own is placed so low.
Thou turn'st thy self-confessing cheek,
As if to meet the breeze's cooling;
Then, Lucy, hear thy tutor speak,
For Love, too, has his hours of schooling.

V.

Too oft my anxious eye has spied
That secret grief thou fain wouldst hide,
The passing pang of humbled pride:
Too oft, when through the splendid hall,
The load-star of each heart and eye,
My fair one leads the glittering ball,
Will her stolen glance on Arthur fall,
With such a blush and such a sigh!
Thou wouldst not yield, for wealth or rank,
The heart thy worth and beauty won,
Nor leave me on this mossy bank,
To meet a rival on a throne:
Why, then, should vain repinings rise,
That to thy lover fate denies

A nobler name, a wide domain,
A baron's birth, a menial train,
Since heaven assigned him, for his part,
A lyre, a falchion, and a heart?

VI.

My sword——its master must be dumb;
But, when a soldier names my name,
Approach, my Lucy! fearless come,
Nor dread to hear of Arthur's shame.
My heart—'mid all yon courtly crew,
Of lordly rank and lofty line,
Is there to love and honour true,
That boasts a pulse so warm as mine?
They praised thy diamonds' lustre rare—
Matched with thine eyes, I thought it faded;
They praised the pearls that bound thy hair—
I only saw the locks they braided;
They talked of wealthy dower and land,
And titles, of high birth the token—
I thought of Lucy's heart and hand,
Nor knew the sense of what was spoken.
And yet, if ranked in Fortune's roll,
I might have learned their choice unwise,
Who rate the dower above the soul,
And Lucy's diamonds o'er her eyes.

VII.

My lyre—it is an idle toy,
That borrows accents not its own,
Like warbler of Columbian sky,
That sings but in a mimic tone.*
Ne'er did it sound o'er sainted well,
Nor boasts it aught of Border spell;
Its strings no feudal slogan pour,
Its heroes draw no broad claymore;
No shouting clans applauses raise,
Because it sung their fathers' praise;
On Scottish moor, or English down,
It ne'er was graced with fair renown;
Nor won,—best meed to minstrel true,—
One favouring smile from fair BUCCLEUCH!
By one poor streamlet sounds its tone,
And heard by one dear maid alone.

VIII.

But, if thou bidd'st, these tones shall tell
Of errant knight and damozelle;
Of the dread knot a wizard tied,
In punishment of maiden's pride;
In notes of marvel and of fear,
That best may charm romantic ear.

* The Mocking Bird.

For Lucy loves,—like COLLINS,* ill-starred name!
Whose lay's requital was that tardy Fame,
Who bound no laurel round his living head,
Should hang it o'er his monument when dead,—
For Lucy loves to tread enchanted strand,
And thread, like him, the maze of Fairy land;
Of golden battlements to view the gleam,
And slumber soft by some Elysian stream:
Such lays she loves,—and, such my Lucy's choice,
What other song can claim her poet's voice?

CANTO FIRST.

I.

WHERE is the maiden of mortal strain,
That may match with the Baron of Triermain?†
She must be lovely and constant and kind,
Holy and pure and humble of mind,
Blithe of cheer and gentle of mood,
Courteous and generous and noble of blood—
Lovely as the sun's first ray,
When it breaks the clouds of an April day;
Constant and true as the widowed dove,
Kind as a minstrel that sings of love;
Pure as the fountain in rocky cave,
Where never sunbeam kissed the wave;
Humble as maiden that loves in vain,
Holy as hermit's vesper strain;
Gentle as breeze that but whispers and dies,
Yet blithe as the light leaves that dance in its sighs;

*COLLINS, according to Johnson, "by indulging some peculiar habits of thought, was eminently delighted with those flights of imagination which pass the bounds of nature, and to which the mind is reconciled only by a passive acquiescence in popular traditions. He loved fairies, genii, giants, and monsters; he delighted to rove through the meanders of enchantment, to gaze on the magnificence of golden palaces, to repose by the waterfalls of Elysian gardens."

†Triermain was a fief of the barony of Gilsland, in Cumberland; it was possessed by a Saxon family at the time of the Conquest, but, "after the death of Gilmore, Lord of Tryermaine and Torcrossock, Hubert Vaux gave Tryermaine and Torcrossock to his second son, Ranulph Vaux, which Ranulph afterwards became heir to his elder brother Robert, the founder of Lanercost, who died without issue. Ranulph, being lord of all Gilsland, gave Gilmore's lands to his own younger son, named Roland, and let the barony descend to his eldest son Robert, son of Ranulph. Roland had issue Alexander, and he Ranulph, after whom succeeded Robert, and they were named Rolands successively, that were lords thereof, until the reign of Edward the Fourth. That house gave for arms, *vert*, a *bend dexter, chequy, or* and *gules*."—*Burn's Antiquities of Westmoreland and Cumberland*, vol. ii. p. 462.

Courteous as monarch the morn he is crowned,
Generous as spring-dews that bless the glad ground;
Noble her blood as the currents that met
In the veins of the noblest Plantagenet—
Such must her form be, her mood and her strain,
That shall match with Sir Roland of Triermain.

II.

Sir Roland de Vaux he hath laid him to sleep,
His blood it was fevered, his breathing was deep.
He had been pricking against the Scot,
The foray was long and the skirmish hot;
His dinted helm and his buckler's plight
Bore token of a stubborn fight.
All in the castle must hold them still,
Harpers must lull him to his rest,
With the slow soft tunes he loves the best,
Till sleep sink down upon his breast,
Like the dew on a summer hill.

III.

It was the dawn of an autumn day;
The sun was struggling with frost-fog grey,
That like a silvery crape was spread
Round Skiddaw's dim and distant head,
And faintly gleamed each painted pane
Of the lordly halls of Triermain,
When that baron bold awoke.
Starting he woke, and loudly did call,
Rousing his menials in bower and hall,
While hastily he spoke:—

IV.

"Hearken, my minstrels! Which of you all
Touched his harp with that dying fall,
So sweet, so soft, so faint,
It seemed an angel's whispered call
To an expiring saint?
And hearken, my merry-men! What time or where
Did she pass, that maid with her heavenly brow,
With her look so sweet and her eyes so fair,
And her graceful step and her angel air,
And the eagle plume on her dark-brown hair,
That passed from my bower e'en now?"

V.

Answered him Richard de Brettville; he
Was chief of the baron's minstrelsy,—
"Silent, noble chieftain, we
Have sat since midnight close,
When such lulling sounds as the brooklet sings,
Murmured from our melting strings,
And hushed you to repose.

Had a harp-note sounded here,
It had caught my watchful ear,
Although it fell as faint and shy
As bashful maiden's half-formed sigh,
When she thinks her lover near."—
Answered Philip of Fasthwaite tall,
He kept guard in the outer-hall,—
"Since at eve our watch took post,
Not a foot has thy portal crossed;
Else had I heard the steps, though low
And light they fell, as when earth receives,
In morn of frost, the withered leaves,
That drop when no winds blow."—

VI.

"Then come thou hither, Henry, my page,
Whom I saved from the sack of Hermitage,
When that dark castle, tower, and spire,
Rose to the skies a pile of fire,
And reddened all the Nine-stane Hill,
And the shrieks of death, that wildly broke
Through devouring flame and smothering smoke,
Made the warrior's heart-blood chill!
The trustiest thou of all my train,
My fleetest courser thou must rein,
And ride to Lyulph's tower,
And from the baron of Triermain
Greet well that sage of power.
He is sprung from Druid sires,
And British bards that tuned their lyres
To Arthur's and Pendragon's praise,
And his who sleeps at Dunmailraise.*
Gifted like his gifted race,
He the characters can trace,
Graven deep in elder time
Upon Helvellyn's cliffs sublime;
Sign and sigil† well doth he know,
And can bode of weal and woe,
Of kingdoms' fall, and fate of wars,
From mystic dreams and course of stars.
He shall tell me if middle earth
To that enchanting shape gave birth,
Or if 'twas but an airy thing,
Such as fantastic slumbers bring,
Framed from the rainbow's varying dyes,
Or fading tints of western skies.

* Dunmailraise is one of the grand passes from Cumberland into Westmoreland. It takes its name from a cairn, or pile of stones, erected, it is said, to the memory of Dunmail, the last king of Cumberland.

† A charm which was formerly worn for the cure of diseases.—*Crabb.*

For, by the blessèd rood I swear,
If that fair form breathe vital air,
No other maiden by my side
Shall ever rest De Vaux's bride!"—

VII.

The faithful page he mounts his steed,
And soon he crossed green Irthing's mead,
Dashed o'er Kirkoswald's verdant plain,
And Eden barred his course in vain.
He passed red Penrith's Table Round,*
For feats of chivalry renowned,
Left Mayburgh's mound† and stones of power,
By Druids raised in magic hour,
And traced the Eamont's winding way,
Till Ulfo's lake beneath him lay.

VIII.

Onwards he rode, the pathway still
Winding betwixt the lake and hill;
Till on the fragment of a rock,
Struck from its base by lightning shock,
He saw the hoary sage:
The silver moss and lichen twined,
With fern and deer-hair checked and lined,
A cushion fit for age;
And o'er him shook the aspen-tree,
A restless rustling canopy.
Then sprung young Henry from his selle,
And greeted Lyulph grave,
And then his master's tale did tell,
And then for counsel crave.
The Man of Years mused long and deep,
Of time's lost treasures taking keep,
And then, as rousing from a sleep,
His solemn answer gave.

IX.

"That maid is born of middle earth,
And may of man be won,

* A circular intrenchment, about half a mile from Penrith, is thus popularly termed. The circle within the ditch is about one hundred and sixty paces in circumference, with openings, or approaches, directly opposite to each other. As the ditch is on the inner side, it could not be intended for the purpose of defence, and it has reasonably been conjectured, that the enclosure was designed for the solemn exercise of feats of chivalry; and the embankment around for the convenience of the spectators.

† Higher up the river Eamont than Arthur's Round Table, is a prodigious enclosure of great antiquity, formed by a collection of stones upon the top of a gently sloping hill, called Mayburgh. In the plain which it encloses there stands erect an unhewn stone of twelve feet in height. Two similar masses are said to have been destroyed during the memory of man. The whole appears to be a monument of Druidical times.

Though there have glided since her birth
Five hundred years and one.
But where's the knight in all the north
That dare the adventure follow forth
So perilous to knightly worth,
In the Valley of St. John?
Listen, youth, to what I tell,
And bind it on thy memory well;
Nor muse that I commence the rhyme
Far distant 'mid the wrecks of time.
The mystic tale, by bard and sage,
Is handed down from Merlin's age.

X.

LYULPH'S TALE.

"King Arthur has ridden from merry Carlisle
When Pentecost was o'er;
He journeyed like errant-knight the while,
And sweetly the summer sun did smile
On mountain, moss, and moor.
Above his solitary track
Rose Glaramara's ridgy back,
Amid whose yawning gulfs the sun
Cast umbered radiance red and dun,
Though never sunbeam could discern
The surface of that sable tarn,*
In whose black mirror you may spy
The stars, while noontide lights the sky.
The gallant king he skirted still
The margin of that mighty hill;
Rock upon rocks incumbent hung,
And torrents, down the gullies flung,
Joined the rude river that brawled on,
Recoiling now from crag and stone,
Now diving deep from human ken,
And raving down its darksome glen.
The monarch judged this desert wild,
With such romantic ruin piled,
Was theatre by Nature's hand
For feat of high achievement planned.

XI.

"O rather he chose, that monarch bold,
On venturous quest to ride,
In plate and mail, by wood and wold,
Than, with ermine trapped and cloth of gold,
In princely bower to bide;

*The small lake called Scales-tarn which lies so deeply embosomed in the recesses of the huge mountain called Saddleback, more poetically Glaramara, is of such great depth, and so completely hidden from the sun, that it is said its beams never reach it, and that the reflection of the stars may be seen at mid-day.

The bursting crash of a foeman's spear,
As it shivered against his mail,
Was merrier music to his ear
Than courtier's whispered tale;
And the clash of Caliburn more dear,
When on the hostile casque it rung,
Than all the lays
To their monarch's praise
That the harpers of Reged sung.
He loved better to rest by wood or river,
Than in bower of his bride, dame Guenever,
For he left that lady so lovely of cheer,
To follow adventures of danger and fear;
And the frank-hearted monarch full little did wot
That she smiled, in his absence, on brave Lancelot.

XII.

"He rode, till over down and dell
The shade more broad and deeper fell,
And though around the mountain's head
Flowed streams of purple, gold, and red,
Dark at the base, unblessed by beam,
Frowned the black rocks, and roared the stream.
With toil the king his way pursued
By lonely Threlkeld's waste and wood,
Till on his course obliquely shone
The narrow valley of SAINT JOHN,
Down sloping to the western sky,
Where lingering sunbeams love to lie.
Right glad to feel those beams again,
The king drew up his charger's rein;
With gauntlet raised he screened his sight,
As dazzled with the level light,
And, from beneath his glove of mail,
Scanned at his ease the lovely vale,
While 'gainst the sun his armour bright
Gleamed ruddy like the beacon's light.

XIII.

"Paled in by many a lofty hill,
The narrow dale lay smooth and still,
And, down its verdant bosom led,
A winding brooklet found its bed.
But, midmost of the vale, a mound
Arose, with airy turrets crowned,
Buttress, and rampire's* circling bound,
And mighty keep and tower;
Seemed some primeval giant's hand
The castle's massive walls had planned,
A ponderous bulwark, to withstand
Ambitious Nimrod's power

* A rampart.

Above the moated entrance slung,
The balanced drawbridge trembling hung,
As jealous of a foe;
Wicket of oak, as iron hard,
With iron studded, clenched, and barred,
And pronged portcullis, joined to guard
The gloomy pass below.
But the grey walls no banners crowned,
Upon the watch-tower's airy round
No warder stood his horn to sound,
No guard beside the bridge was found,
And, where the Gothic gateway frowned,
Glanced neither bill nor bow.

XIV.

"Beneath the castle's gloomy pride,
In ample round did Arthur ride
Three times; nor living thing he spied,
Nor heard a living sound,
Save that, awakening from her dream,
The owlet now began to scream,
In concert with the rushing stream,
That washed the battled mound.
He lighted from his goodly steed,
And he left him to graze on bank and mead;
And slowly he climbed the narrow way,
That reached the entrance grim and grey,
And he stood the outward arch below,
And his bugle-horn prepared to blow,
In summons blithe and bold,
Deeming to rouse from iron sleep
The guardian of this dismal keep,
Which well he guessed the hold
Of wizard stern, or goblin grim,
Or pagan of gigantic limb,
The tyrant of the wold.

XV.

"The ivory bugle's golden tip
Twice touched the monarch's manly lip,
And twice his hand withdrew.
Think not but Arthur's heart was good!
His shield was crossed by the blessed rood,
Had a pagan host before him stood,
He had charged them through and through;
Yet the silence of that ancient place
Sunk on his heart, and he paused a space
Ere yet his horn he blew.
But, instant as its 'larum rung,
The castle gate was open flung,
Portcullis rose with crashing groan
Full harshly up its groove of stone,

The balance-beams obeyed the blast,
And down the trembling drawbridge cast.
The vaulted arch before him lay,
With nought to bar the gloomy way,
And onward Arthur paced, with hand
On Caliburn's* resistless brand.

XVI.

"A hundred torches, flashing bright,
Dispelled at once the gloomy night
That loured along the walls,
And showed the king's astonished sight
The inmates of the halls.
Nor wizard stern, nor goblin grim,
Nor giant huge of form and limb,
Nor heathen knight was there;
But the cressets, which odours flung aloft,
Showed, by their yellow light and soft,
A band of damsels fair!
Onward they came, like summer wave
That dances to the shore;
A hundred voices welcome gave,
And welcome o'er and o'er!
A hundred lovely hands assail
The bucklers of the monarch's mail,
And busy laboured to unhasp
Rivet of steel and iron clasp;
One wrapped him in a mantle fair,
And one flung odours on his hair;
His short curled ringlets one smoothed down
One wreathed them with a myrtle crown.
A bride upon her wedding-day
Was tended ne'er by troop so gay.

XVII.

"Loud laughed they all,—the king, in vain,
With questions tasked the giddy train;
Let him entreat, or crave, or call,
'Twas one reply,—loud laughed they all.
Then o'er him mimic chains they fling,
Framed of the fairest flowers of spring.
While some their gentle force unite,
Onward to drag the wondering knight,
Some, bolder, urge his pace with blows,
Dealt with the lily or the rose.
Behind him were in triumph borne
The warlike arms he late had worn.
Four of the train combined to rear
The terrors of Tintadgel's spear;†

* This was the name of King Arthur's well-known sword, sometimes also called Excalibar.

† Tintadgel Castle, in Cornwall, is reported to have been the birthplace of King Arthur.

Two, laughing at their lack of strength,
Dragged Caliburn in cumbrous length;
One, while she aped a martial stride,
Placed on her brows the helmet's pride,
Then screamed, 'twixt laughter and surprise,
To feel its depth o'erwhelm her eyes.
With revel-shout, and triumph-song,
Thus gaily marched the giddy throng.

XVIII.

"Through many a gallery and hall
They led, I ween, their royal thrall.
At length, beneath a fair arcade
Their march and song at once they stayed.
The eldest maiden of the band,
(The lovely maid was scarce eighteen,)
Raised, with imposing air, her hand,
And reverent silence did command,
On entrance of their Queen,
And they were mute.—But as a glance
They steal on Arthur's countenance
Bewildered with surprise,
Their smothered mirth again 'gan speak,
In archly dimpled chin and cheek,
And laughter-lighted eyes.

XIX.

"The attributes of these high days
Now only live in minstrel-lays;
For Nature, now exhausted, still
Was then profuse of good and ill.
Strength was gigantic, valour high,
And wisdom soared beyond the sky,
And beauty had such matchless beam,
As lights not now a lover's dream.
Yet, e'en in that romantic age,
Ne'er were such charms by mortal seen
As Arthur's dazzled eyes engage,
When forth on that enchanted stage,
With glittering train of maid and page,
Advanced the castle's Queen.
While up the hall she slowly passed,
Her dark eye on the king she cast,
That flashed expression strong:
The longer dwelt that lingering look,
Her cheek the livelier colour took,
And scarce the shame-faced king could brook
The gaze that lasted long.
A sage, who had that look espied,
Where kindling passion strove with pride,
Had whispered, 'Prince, beware!
From the chafed tiger rend the prey,
Rush on the lion when at bay,

Bar the fell dragon's blighted way,
But shun that lovely snare!'

XX.

"At once, that inward strife suppressed,
The dame approached her warlike guest,
With greeting in that fair degree,
Where female pride and courtesy
Are blended with such passing art
As awes at once and charms the heart.
A courtly welcome first she gave,
Then of his goodness 'gan to crave
Construction fair and true
Of her light maidens' idle mirth,
Who drew from lonely glens their birth,
Nor knew to pay to stranger worth
And dignity their due;
And then she prayed that he would rest
That night her castle's honoured guest.
The monarch meetly thanks expressed;
The banquet rose at her behest,
With lay and tale, and laugh and jest,
Apace the evening flew.

XXI.

"The lady sate the monarch by,
Now in her turn abashed and shy,
And with indifference seemed to hear
The toys he whispered in her ear.
Her bearing modest was and fair,
Yet shadows of constraint were there,
That showed an over-cautious care
Some inward thought to hide;
Oft did she pause in full reply,
And oft cast down her large dark eye,
Oft checked the soft voluptuous sigh,
That heaved her bosom's pride.
Slight symptoms these, but shepherds know
How hot the mid-day sun shall glow
From the mist of morning sky;
And so the wily monarch guessed,
That this assumed restraint expressed
More ardent passions in the breast,
Than ventured to the eye.
Closer he pressed, while beakers rang,
While maidens laughed and minstrels sang,
Still closer to her ear—
But why pursue the common tale?
Or wherefore show how knights prevail
When ladies dare to hear?
Or wherefore trace, from what slight cause
Its source one tyrant passion draws,

Till, mastering all within,
Where lives the man that has not tried,
How mirth can into folly glide,
And folly into sin!"

CANTO SECOND.

I.

LYULPH'S TALE CONTINUED.

"Another day, another day,
And yet another glides away!
The Saxon stern, the pagan Dane
Maraud on Britain's shores again.
Arthur, of Christendom the flower,
Lies loitering in a lady's bower;
The horn, that foemen wont to fear,
Sounds but to wake the Cumbrian deer,
And Caliburn, the British pride,
Hangs useless by a lover's side.

II.

"Another day, another day,
And yet another, glides away!
Heroic plans in pleasure drowned,
He thinks not of the Table Round;
In lawless love dissolved his life,
He thinks not of his beauteous wife;
Better he loves to snatch a flower
From bosom of his paramour,
Than from a Saxon knight to wrest
The honours of his heathen crest;
Better to wreathe, 'mid tresses brown,
The heron's plume her hawk struck down,
Than o'er the altar give to flow
The banners of a paynim foe.
Thus, week by week, and day by day,
His life inglorious glides away,
But she, that soothes his dream, with fear
Beholds his hour of wakening near.

III.

"Much force have mortal charms to stay
Our pace in Virtue's toilsome way;
But Guendolen's might far outshine
Each maid of merely mortal line.
Her mother was of human birth,
Her sire a Genie of the earth,
In days of old deemed to preside
O'er lovers' wiles and beauty's pride,

By youths and virgins worshipped long,
With festive dance and choral song,
Till, when the cross to Britain came,
On heathen altars died the flame.
Now, deep in Wastdale's solitude,
The downfall of his rights he rued,
And, born of his resentment heir,
He trained to guile that lady fair,
To sink in slothful sin and shame,
The champions of the Christian name.
Well skilled to keep vain thoughts alive,
And all to promise, nought to give,
The timid youth had hope in store,
The bold and pressing gained no more.
As wildered children leave their home,
After the rainbow's arch to roam,
Her lovers bartered fair esteem,
Faith, fame, and honour, for a dream.

IV.

"Her sire's soft arts the soul to tame
She practised thus—till Arthur came;
Then, frail humanity had part,
And all the mother claimed her heart.
Forgot each rule her father gave,
Sunk from a princess to a slave,
Too late must Guendolen deplore,
He, that has all, can hope no more!
Now must she see her lover strain,
At every turn, her feeble chain;
Watch, to new-bind each knot, and shrink
To view each fast-decaying link.
Art she invokes to Nature's aid,
Her vest to zone, her locks to braid;
Each varied pleasure heard her call,
The feast, the tourney, and the ball:
Her storied lore she next applies,
Taxing her mind to aid her eyes;
Now more than mortal wise, and then
In female softness sunk again;
Now, raptured, with each wish complying,
With feigned reluctance now denying;
Each charm she varied, to retain
A varying heart—and all in vain!

V.

"Thus in the garden's narrow bound,
Flanked by some castle's Gothic round,
Fain would the artist's skill provide,
The limits of his realm to hide.
The walks in labyrinths he twines,
Shade after shade with skill combines,

With many a varied flowery knot,
And copse and arbour decks the spot,
Tempting the hasty foot to stay,
And linger on the lovely way——
Vain art! vain hope! 'tis fruitless all!
At length we reach the bounding wall,
And, sick of flower and trim-dressed tree,
Long for rough glades and forest free.

VI.

"Three summer months had scantly flown,
When Arthur, in embarrassed tone,
Spoke of his liegemen and his throne;
Said, all too long had been his stay,
And duties, which a monarch sway,
Duties, unknown to humbler men,
Must tear her knight from Guendolen.—
She listened silently the while,
Her mood expressed in bitter smile;
Beneath her eye must Arthur quail,
And oft resume the unfinished tale,
Confessing, by his downcast eye,
The wrong he sought to justify.
He ceased. A moment mute she gazed,
And then her looks to heaven she raised;
One palm her temples veiled, to hide
The tear that sprung in spite of pride;
The other for an instant pressed
The foldings of her silken vest!

VII.

"At her reproachful sign and look,
The hint the monarch's conscience took.
Eager he spoke—'No, lady, no!
Deem not of British Arthur so,
Nor think he can deserter prove
To the dear pledge of mutual love!
I swear by sceptre and by sword,
As belted knight and Britain's lord,
That, if a boy shall claim my care,
That boy is born a kingdom's heir;
But, if a maiden Fate allows,
To choose that maid a fitting spouse,
A summer-day in lists shall strive
My knights,—the bravest knights alive,—
And he, the best and bravest tried,
Shall Arthur's daughter claim for bride.'—
He spoke, with voice resolved and high—
The lady deigned him not reply.

VIII.

"At dawn of morn, ere on the brake
His matins did a warbler make,

Or stirred his wing to brush away
A single dew-drop from the spray,
Ere yet a sunbeam, through the mist,
The castle-battlements had kissed,
The gates revolve, the drawbridge falls,
And Arthur sallies from the walls.
Doffed his soft garb of Persia's loom,
And steel from spur to helmet-plume,
His Lybian steed full proudly trode,
And joyful neighed beneath his load.
The monarch gave a passing sigh
To penitence and pleasures by,
When, lo! to his astonished ken
Appeared the form of Guendolen.

IX.

"Beyond the outmost wall she stood,
Attired like huntress of the wood:
Sandalled her feet, her ankles bare,
And eagle-plumage decked her hair;
Firm was her look, her bearing bold,
And in her hand a cup of gold.
'Thou goest!' she said, 'and ne'er again
Must we two meet, in joy or pain.
Full fain would I this hour delay,
Though weak the wish—yet, wilt thou stay?
No! thou look'st forward. Still attend,—
Part we like lover and like friend.'—
She raised the cup—'Not this the juice
The sluggish vines of earth produce;
Pledge we, at parting, in the draught
Which Genii love!'—she said, and quaffed;
And strange unwonted lustres fly
From her flushed cheek and sparkling eye.

X.

"The courteous monarch bent him low,
And, stooping down from saddlebow,
Lifted the cup, in act to drink.
A drop escaped the goblet's brink—
Intense as liquid fire from hell,
Upon the charger's neck it fell.
Screaming with agony and fright,
He bolted twenty feet upright—
—The peasant still can show the dint,
Where his hoofs lighted on the flint.
From Arthur's hand the goblet flew,*
Scattering a shower of fiery dew,

* The author has an indistinct recollection of an adventure somewhat similar to that which is here ascribed to King Arthur, having befallen one of the ancient kings of Denmark. The horn in

That burned and blighted where it fell!
The frantic steed rushed up the dell,
As whistles from the bow the reed;
Nor bit nor rein could check his speed
Until he gained the hill;
Then breath and sinew failed apace,
And, reeling from the desperate race,
He stood exhausted, still.
The monarch, breathless and amazed,
Back on the fatal castle gazed——
Nor tower nor donjon could he spy,
Darkening against the morning sky;*
But, on the spot where once they frowned,
The lonely streamlet brawled around
A tufted knoll, where dimly shone
Fragments of rock and rifted stone.
Musing on this strange hap the while,
The king wends back to fair Carlisle;
And cares, that cumber royal sway,
Wore memory of the past away.

XI.

"Full fifteen years, and more, were sped,
Each brought new wreaths for Arthur's head.
Twelve bloody fields, with glory fought,
The Saxons to subjection brought;†

which the burning liquor was presented to that monarch is said still to be preserved in the Royal Museum at Copenhagen.

*—"We now gained a view of the Vale of St. John's, a very narrow dell, hemmed in by mountains, through which a small brook makes many meanderings, washing little enclosures of grass-ground, which stretch up the rising of the hills. In the widest part of the dale you are struck with the appearance of an ancient ruined castle, which seems to stand upon the summit of a little mount, the mountains around forming an amphitheatre. This massive bulwark shows a front of various towers, and makes an awful, rude, and Gothic appearance, with its lofty turrets and ragged battlements: we traced the galleries, the bending arches, the buttresses. The greatest antiquity stands characterized in its architecture; the inhabitants near it assert it is an antediluvian structure.

"The traveller's curiosity is roused, and he prepares to make a nearer approach, when that curiosity is put upon the rack by his being assured, that, if he advances, certain genii who govern the place, by virtue of their supernatural arts and necromancy, will strip it of all its beauties, and, by enchantment, transform the magic walls. The vale seems adapted for the habitation of such beings; its gloomy recesses and retirements look like haunts of evil spirits. There was no delusion in the report; we were soon convinced of its truth; for this piece of antiquity, so venerable and noble in its aspect, as we drew near changed its figure, and proved no other than a shaken massive pile of rocks, which stand in the midst of this little vale, disunited from the adjoining mountains, and have so much the real form and resemblance of a castle, that they bear the name of the Castle Rocks of St. John."—*Hutchinson's Excursion to the Lakes*, p. 121.

† Arthur is said to have defeated the Saxons in twelve pitched battles, and to have achieved the other feats alluded to in the text.

Rython, the mighty giant, slain
By his good brand, relieved Bretagne;
The Pictish Gillamore in fight,
And Roman Lucius, owned his might;
And wide was through the world renowned
The glories of his Table Round.
Each knight, who sought adventurous fame,
To the bold court of Britain came,
And all who suffered causeless wrong,
From tyrant proud, or fratour* strong,
Sought Arthur's presence to complain,
Nor there for aid implored in vain.

XII.

"For this the king, with pomp and pride,
Held solemn court at Whitsuntide,
And summoned prince and peer,
All who owed homage for their land,
Or who craved knighthood from his hand,
Or who had succour to demand,
To come from far and near.
At such high tide, were glee and game
Mingled with feats of martial fame,
For many a stranger champion came
In lists to break a spear;—
And not a knight of Arthur's host,
Save that he trode some foreign coast,
But at this feast of Pentecost
Before him must appear.—
Ah, Minstrels! when the Table Round
Arose, with all its warriors crowned,
There was a theme for bards to sound
In triumph to their string!
Five hundred years are passed and gone,
But Time shall draw his dying groan,
Ere he behold the British throne
Begirt with such a ring!

XIII.

"The heralds named the appointed spot,
As Caerleon or Camelot,
Or Carlisle fair and free.
At Penrith, now, the feast was set,
And in fair Eamont's vale were met
The flower of chivalry.
There Galaad sate with manly grace,
Yet maiden meekness in his face;
There Morolt of the iron mace,†
And love-lorn Tristrem there;

* Deceiver.

† The characters named in the following stanza are all of them more or less distinguished in the romances which treat of King

And Dinadam with lively glance,
And Lanval with the fairy lance,
And Mordred with his look askance,
Brunor and Bevidere.
Why should I tell of numbers more?
Sir Cay, Sir Banier, and Sir Bore,
Sir Carodac the keen,
The gentle Gawain's courteous lore,
Hector de Mares and Pellinore,
And Lancelot, that ever more
Looked stolen-wise on the Queen.*

XIV.

"When wine and mirth did most abound,
And harpers played their blithest round,
A shrilly trumpet shook the ground,
And marshals cleared the ring;
A Maiden, on a palfrey white,
Heading a band of damsels bright,
Paced through the circle, to alight
And kneel before the king.
Arthur, with strong emotion, saw
Her graceful boldness checked by awe,
Her dress like huntress of the wold,
Her bow and baldric trapped with gold,
Her sandalled feet, her ancles bare,
And the eagle-plume that decked her hair.
Graceful her veil she backwards flung——
The King, as from his seat he sprung,
Almost cried, 'Guendolen!'
But 'twas a face more frank and wild,
Betwixt the woman and the child,

Arthur and his Round Table, and their names are strung together according to the established custom of minstrels upon such occasions: for example, in the ballad of the Marriage of Sir Gawaine:—

"Sir Lancelot, Sir Stephen bolde,
They rode with them that daye,
And, foremost of the companye,
There rode the stewarde Kaye:

"Soe did Sir Banier and Sir Bore,
And eke Sir Garratte keen,
Sir Tristram too, that gentle knight,
To the forest fresh and greene."

* Upon this delicate subject hear Richard Robinson, citizen of London, in his Assertion of King Arthur:—"But as it is a thing sufficiently apparant that she (Guenever, wife of King Arthur) was beautiful, so it is a thing doubted whether she was chaste, yea or no. Truly, so far as I can with honestie, I would spare the impayred honour and fame of noble women. But yet the truth of the historie pluckes me by the eare, and willeth not onely, but commandeth me to declare what the ancients have deemed of her. To wrestle or contend with so greate authoritie were indeede unto me a controversie, and that greate."—*Assertion of King Arthure. Imprinted by John Wolfe, London*, 1582.

Where less of magic beauty smiled
Than of the race of men;
And in the forehead's haughty grace,
The lines of Britain's royal race,
Pendragon's you might ken.

XV.

"Faltering, yet gracefully, she said—
'Great Prince! behold an orphan maid,
In her departed mother's name,
A father's vowed protection claim!
The vow was sworn in desert lone,
In the deep valley of Saint John.'—
At once the King the suppliant raised,
And kissed her brow, her beauty praised;
His vow, he said, should well be kept,
Ere in the sea the sun was dipped:
Then, conscious, glanced upon his queen:
But she, unruffled at the scene,
Of human frailty construed mild,
Looked upon Lancelot and smiled.

XVI.

"'Up! up! each knight of gallant crest!
Take buckler, spear, and brand!
He that to-day shall bear him best,
Shall win my Gyneth's hand.
And Arthur's daughter, when a bride,
Shall bring a noble dower;
Both fair Strath-Clyde and Reged wide,
And Carlisle town and tower.'—
Then might you hear each valiant knight,
To page and squire that cried,
'Bring my armour bright, and my courser wight!
'Tis not each day that a warrior's might
May win a royal bride.'—
Then cloaks and caps of maintenance
In haste aside they fling;
The helmets glance, and gleams the lance,
And the steel-weaved hauberks ring.
Small care had they of their peaceful array,
They might gather it that wolde;
For brake and bramble glittered gay,
With pearls and cloth of gold.

XVII.

"Within trumpet-sound of the Table Round
Were fifty champions free;
And they all arise to fight that prize,—
They all arise but three.
Nor love's fond troth, nor wedlock's oath,
One gallant could withhold,
For priests will allow of a broken vow,
For penance or for gold.

But sigh and glance from ladies bright
Among the troop were thrown,
To plead their right and true-love plight
And plain of honour flown.
The knights they busied them so fast,
With buckling spur and belt,
That sigh and look by ladies cast,
Were neither seen nor felt.
From pleading, or upbraiding glance,
Each gallant turns aside,
And only thought, 'If speeds my lance,
A queen becomes my bride!
She has fair Strath-Clyde, and Reged wide,
And Carlisle tower and town;
She is the loveliest maid, beside,
That ever heired a crown.'—
So in haste their coursers they bestride,
And strike their visors down.

XVIII.

"The champions, armed in martial sort,
Have thronged into the list,
And but three knights of Arthur's court
Are from the tourney missed.
And still these lovers' fame survives
For faith so constant shown,—
There were two who loved their neighbours' wives,
And one who loved his own.*
The first was Lancelot de Lac,
The second Tristrem bold,
The third was valiant Carodac,
Who won the cup of gold,†
What time, of all King Arthur's crew,
(Thereof came jeer and laugh,)
He, as the mate of lady true,
Alone the cup could quaff.

* "In our forefathers' tyme, when papistrie, as a standyng poole, covered and overflowed all Englande, fewe bookes were read in our tongue, savying certaine bookes of chevalrie, as they said, for pastime and pleasure; which, as some say, were made in the monasteries, by idle monks or wanton chanons. As one, for example, 'La Morte d'Arthure;' the whole pleasure of which booke standeth in two speciall poynts, in open manslaughter and bold bawdrye: in which booke they be counted the noblest knightes that do kill most men without any quarrell, and commit fowlest adoulteries by sutlest shiftes; as Sir Launcelot with the wife of King Arthur, his master; Sir Tristram, with the wife of King Marke, his uncle; Sir Lamerocke, with the wife of King Lote, that was his own aunt. This is good stuff for wise men to laughe at; or honest men to take pleasure at, yet I know when God's Bible was banished the Court, and 'La Morte d'Arthure' received into the prince's chamber."—*Ascham's Schoolmaster.*

† See the comic tale of the Boy and the Mantle, in the third volume of Percy's "Reliques of Ancient Poetry," from the Breton or Norman original of which Ariosto is supposed to have taken his Tale of the Enchanted Cup.

Though envy's tongue would fain surmise,
That, but for very shame,
Sir Carodac, to fight that prize,
Had given both cup and dame;
Yet, since but one of that fair court
Was true to wedlock's shrine,
Brand him who will with base report,—
He shall be free from mine.

XIX.

"Now caracoled* the steeds in air,
Now plumes and pennons wantoned fair,
As all around the lists so wide
In panoply the champions ride.
King Arthur saw, with startled eye,
The flower of chivalry march by,
The bulwark of the Christian creed,
The kingdom's shield in hour of need.
Too late he thought him of the woe,
Might from their civil conflict flow;
For well he knew they would not part
Till cold was many a gallant heart.
His hasty vow he 'gan to rue,
And Gyneth then apart he drew;
To her his leading-staff resigned,
But added caution grave and kind.

XX.

"'Thou seest, my child, as promise-bound,
I bid the trump for tourney sound.
Take thou my warder, as the queen
And umpire of the martial scene;
But mark thou this:—as Beauty bright
Is polar star to valiant knight,
As at her word he draws, he draws,
His fairest guerdon her applause,
So gentle maid should never ask
Of knighthood vain and dangerous task;
And Beauty's eyes should ever be
Like the twin stars that soothe the sea,
And Beauty's breath should whisper peace,
And bid the storm of battle cease.
I tell thee this, lest all too far
These knights urge tourney into war.
Blithe at the trumpet let them go,
And fairly counter blow for blow;—
No striplings these, who succour need
For a razed helm or falling steed.
But, Gyneth, when the strife grows warm,
And threatens death or deadly harm,

* The caracol is the half-turn which a horseman makes on either side.

Thy sire entreats, thy king commands,
Thou drop the warder from thy hands.
Trust thou thy father with thy fate,
Doubt not he choose thee fitting mate;
Nor be it said, through Gyneth's pride
A rose of Arthur's chaplet died.'—

XXI.

"A proud and discontented glow
O'ershadowed Gyneth's brow of snow;
She put the warder by:—
'Reserve thy boon, my liege,' she said,
'Thus chaffered down and limited,
Debased and narrowed, for a maid
Of less degree than I.
No petty chief but holds his heir
At a more honoured price and rare
Than Britain's king holds me!
Although the sun-burned maid, for dower,
Has but her father's rugged tower,
His barren hill and lea.
King Arthur swore, 'by crown and sword,
'As belted knight and Britain's lord,
'That a whole summer's day should strive
'His knights, the bravest knights alive!'
Recall thine oath! and to her glen
Poor Gyneth can return agen;
Not on thy daughter will the stain,
That soils thy sword and crown, remain.
But think not she will e'er be bride
Save to the bravest, proved and tried;
Pendragon's daughter will not fear
For clashing sword or splintered spear,
Nor shrink though blood should flow;
And all too well sad Guendolen
Hath taught the faithlessness of men,
That child of hers should pity, when
Their meed they undergo.'—

XXII.

"He frowned and sighed, the monarch bold:—
'I give, what I may not withhold;
For, not for danger, dread, nor death,
Must British Arthur break his faith.
Too late I mark, thy mother's art
Hath taught thee this relentless part.
I blame her not, for she had wrong;
But not to these my faults belong.
Use, then, the warder as thou wilt;
But trust me, that, if life be spilt,
In Arthur's love, in Arthur's grace,
Gyneth shall lose a daughter's place.'

With that he turned his head aside,
Nor brooked to gaze upon her pride,
As, with the truncheon raised, she sate
The arbitress of mortal fate;
Nor brooked to mark, in ranks disposed,
How the bold champions stood opposed,
For shrill the trumpet-flourish fell
Upon his ear, like passing bell!
Then first from sight of martial fray
Did Britain's champion turn away.

XXIII.

"But Gyneth heard the clangour high,
As hears the hawk the partridge cry.
Oh, blame her not! the blood was hers,
That at the trumpet's summons stirs;—
And e'en the gentlest female eye
Might the brave strife of chivalry
A while untroubled view;
So well accomplished was each knight,
To strike and to defend in fight,
Their meeting was a goodly sight,
While plate and mail held true.
The lists with painted plumes were strown,
Upon the wind at random thrown,
But helm and breastplate bloodless shone;
It seemed their feathered crests alone
Should this encounter rue.
And ever, as the combat grows,
The trumpet's cheery voice arose
Like lark's shrill song the flourish flows,
Heard while the gale of April blows
The merry greenwood through.

XXIV.

"But soon to earnest grew their game,
The spears drew blood, the swords struck flame,
And, horse and man, to ground there came
Knights, who shall rise no more!
Gone was the pride the war that graced,
Gay shields were cleft, and crests defaced,
And steel coats riven, and helms unbraced,
And pennons streamed with gore.
Gone, too, were fence and fair array,
And desperate strength made deadly way
At random through the bloody fray,
And blows were dealt with headlong sway,
Unheeding where they fell;
And now the trumpet's clamours seem
Like the shrill sea-bird's wailing scream,
Heard o'er the whirlpool's gulfing stream,
The sinking seaman's knell!

XXV.

"Seemed in this dismal hour, that Fate
Would Camlan's ruin antedate,
And spare dark Mordred's crime:
Already gasping on the ground,
Lie twenty of the Table Round,
Of chivalry the prime.
Arthur, in anguish, tore away
From head and beard his tresses grey,
And she, proud Gyneth, felt dismay,
And quaked with ruth and fear;
But still she deemed her mother's shade
Hung o'er the tumult, and forbade
The sign that had the slaughter stayed,
And chid the rising tear.
Then Brunor, Taulas, Mador, fell,
Helias the White, and Lionel,
And many a champion more;
Rochemont and Dinadam are down,
And Ferrand of the Forest Brown
Lies gasping in his gore.
Vanoc by mighty Morolt pressed,
Even to the confines of the list,
Young Vanoc of the beardless face,
(Fame spoke the youth of Merlin's race,)
O'erpowered at Gyneth's footstool bled,
His heart's blood dyed her sandals red.
But then the sky was overcast,
Then howled at once a whirlwind's blast,
And, rent by sudden throes,
Yawned in mid lists the quaking earth,
And from the gulf, tremendous birth!
The form of Merlin rose.

XXVI.

"Sternly the wizard prophet eyed
The dreary lists with slaughter dyed,
And sternly raised his hand:—
'Madmen!' he said, 'your strife forbear!
And thou, fair cause of mischief, hear
The doom thy fates demand!
Long shall close in stony sleep
Eyes for ruth that would not weep,
Iron lethargy shall seal
Heart that pity scorned to feel.
Yet, because thy mother's art
Warped thine unsuspicious heart,
And for love of Arthur's race,
Punishment is blent with grace.
Thou shalt bear thy penance lone,
In the Valley of Saint John,

And this weird* shall overtake thee;—
Sleep, until a knight shall wake thee,
For feats of arms as far renowned
As warrior of the Table Round.
Long endurance of thy slumber
Well may teach the world to number
All their woes from Gyneth's pride,
When the Red Cross champions died.'—

XXVII.

"As Merlin speaks, on Gyneth's eye
Slumber's load begins to lie;
Fear and Anger vainly strive
Still to keep its light alive.
Twice, with effort and with pause,
O'er her brow her hand she draws;
Twice her strength in vain she tries,
From the fatal chair to rise;
Merlin's magic doom is spoken,
Vanoc's death must now be wroken.†
Slow the dark-fringed eyelids fall,
Curtaining each azure ball,
Slowly as on summer eves
Violets fold their dusky leaves.
The weighty baton of command
Now bears down her sinking hand,
On her shoulder droops her head;
Net of pearl and golden thread,
Bursting, gave her locks to flow
O'er her arm and breast of snow.
And so lovely seemed she there,
Spell-bound in her ivory chair,
That her angry sire, repenting,
Craved stern Merlin for relenting,
And the champions, for her sake,
Would again the contest wake;
Till, in necromantic night,
Gyneth vanished from their sight.

XXVIII.

"Still she bears her weird alone,
In the Valley of Saint John;
And her semblance oft will seem,
Mingling in a champion's dream,
Of her weary lot to plain,
And crave his aid to burst her chain.
While her wondrous tale was new,
Warriors to her rescue drew,
East and west, and south and north
From the Liffy, Thames, and Forth.
Most have sought in vain the glen,
Tower nor castle could they ken;

*Doom. †Avenged.

Not at every time or tide,
Nor by every eye descried.
Fast and vigil must be borne,
Many a night in watching worn,
Ere an eye of mortal powers
Can discern those magic towers.
Of the persevering few,
Some from hopeless task withdrew,
When they read the dismal threat
Graved upon the gloomy gate.
Few have braved the yawning door,
And those few returned no more.
In the lapse of time forgot,
Well-nigh lost is Gyneth's lot;
Sound her sleep as in the tomb,
Till wakened by the trump of doom."

END OF LYULPH'S TALE.

Here pause, my tale; for all too soon,
My Lucy, comes the hour of noon.
Already from thy lofty dome
Its courtly inmates 'gin to roam,
And each, to kill the goodly day
That God has granted them, his way
Of lazy sauntering has sought;
Lordlings and witlings not a few,
Incapable of doing aught,
Yet ill at ease with nought to do.
Here is no longer place for me;
For, Lucy, thou wouldst blush to see
Some phantom, fashionably thin,
With limb of lath and kerchiefed chin,
And lounging gape, or sneering grin,
Steal sudden on our privacy.
And how should I, so humbly born,
Endure the graceful spectre's scorn?
Faith! ill, I fear, while conjuring wand
Of English oak is hard at hand.

II.

Or grant the hour be all too soon
For Hessian boot and pantaloon,
And grant the lounger seldom strays
Beyond the smooth and gravelled maze,
Laud we the gods, that Fashion's train
Holds hearts of more adventurous strain.
Artists are hers, who scorn to trace
Their rules from Nature's boundless grace,
But their right paramount assert
To limit her by pedant art,

Damning whate'er of vast and fair
Exceeds a canvas three feet square.
This thicket, for their *gumption* fit,
May furnish such a happy *bit*.
Bards, too, are hers, wont to recite
Their own sweet lays by waxen light,
Half in the salver's tingle drowned,
While the chasse-café glides around;
And such may hither secret stray,
To labour an extempore:
Or sportsman, with his boisterous hollo,
May here his wiser spaniel follow,
Or stage-struck Juliet may presume
To choose this bower for tiring-room;
And we alike must shun regard,
From painter, player, sportsman, bard.
Insects that skim in Fashion's sky,
Wasp, blue-bottle, or butterfly,
Lucy, have all alarms for us,
For all can hum and all can buzz.

III.

But oh, my Lucy, say how long
We still must dread this trifling throng,
And stoop to hide, with coward art,
The genuine feelings of the heart!
No parents thine, whose just command
Should rule their child's obedient hand;
Thy guardians, with contending voice,
Press each his individual choice.
And which is Lucy's?—Can it be
That puny fop, trimmed cap-a-pee,
Who loves in the saloon to show
The arms that never knew a foe;
Whose sabre trails along the ground,
Whose legs in shapeless boots are drowned;
A new Achilles, sure,—the steel
Fled from his breast to fence his heel;
One, for the simple manly grace
That wont to deck our martial race,
Who comes in foreign trashery
Of tinkling chain and spur,
A walking haberdashery,
Of feathers, lace, and fur:
In Rowley's antiquated phrase,
Horse-milliner* of modern days.

IV.

Or is it he, the wordy youth,
So early trained for statesman's part,

* "The trammels of the palfraye pleased his sight,
And the horse-millanere his head with roses dight."
Rowley's Ballads of Charille.

Who talks of honour, faith, and truth,
As themes that he has got by heart;
Whose ethics Chesterfield can teach,
Whose logic is from Single-speech;*
Who scorns the meanest thought to vent,
Save in the phrase of parliament;
Who, in a tale of cat and mouse,
Calls "order," and "divides the house,"
Who "craves permission to reply,"
Whose "noble friend is in his eye;"
Whose loving tender some have reckoned
A *motion* you should gladly *second?*

V.

What, neither? Can there be a third,
To such resistless swains preferred?—
O why, my Lucy, turn aside,
With that quick glance of injured pride?
Forgive me, love, I cannot bear
That altered and resentful air.
Were all the wealth of Russel mine,
And all the rank of Howard's line,
All would I give for leave to dry
That dewdrop trembling in thine eye.
Think not I fear such fops can wile
From Lucy more than careless smile;
But yet if wealth and high degree
Give gilded counters currency,
Must I not fear, when rank and birth
Stamp the pure ore of genuine worth?
Nobles there are, whose martial fires
Rival the fame that raised their sires,
And patriots, skilled through storms of fate
To guide and guard the reeling state.
Such, such there are—if such should come
Arthur must tremble and be dumb,
Self-exiled seek some distant shore,
And mourn till life and grief are o'er.

VI.

What sight, what signal of alarm,
That Lucy clings to Arthur's arm?
Or is it, that the rugged way
Makes Beauty lean on lover's stay?
Oh, no! for on the vale and brake,
Nor sight nor sounds of danger wake,
And this trim sward of velvet green
Were carpet for the fairy queen.
That pressure slight was but to tell,
That Lucy loves her Arthur well.

* William Gerard Hamilton, commonly called "Single-Speech Hamilton."

And fain would banish from his mind
Suspicious fear and doubt unkind.

VII.

But wouldst thou bid the demons fly
Like mist before the dawning sky,
There is but one resistless spell—
Say, wilt thou guess, or must I tell?
'Twere hard to name, in minstrel phrase,
A landaulet and four blood-bays,
But bards agree this wizard band
Can but be bound in Northern Land.
'Tis there—nay, draw not back thy hand!—
'Tis there this slender finger round
Must golden amulet be bound,
Which, blessed with many a holy prayer,
Can change to rapture lovers' care,
And doubt and jealousy shall die,
And fears give place to ecstasy.

VIII.

Now, trust me, Lucy, all too long
Has been thy lover's tale and song.
O why so silent, love, I pray?
Have I not spoke the livelong day?
And will not Lucy deign to say
One word her friend to bless?
I ask but one—a simple sound,
Within three little letters bound,
O let the word be YES!

INTRODUCTION TO CANTO THIRD.

I.

LONG loved, long wooed, and lately won,
My life's best hope, and now mine own!
Doth not this rude and Alpine glen
Recall our favourite haunts agen?
A wild resemblance we can trace,
Though reft of every softer grace,
As the rough warrior's brow may bear
A likeness to a sister fair.
Full well advised our Highland host,
That this wild pass on foot be crossed,
While round Ben-Cruach's mighty base
Wheel the slow steeds and lingering chaise,
The keen old Carle, with Scottish pride,
He praised his glen and mountains wide;
An eye he bears for Nature's face,
Aye, and for woman's lovely grace.

E'en in such mean degree we find
The subtle Scot's observing mind;
For, nor the chariot nor the train
Could gape of vulgar wonder gain,
But when old Allan would expound
Of Beal-na-paish* the Celtic sound,
His bonnet doffed, and bow, applied
His legend to my bonny bride;
While Lucy blushed beneath his eye,
Courteous and cautious, shrewd and sly.

II.

Enough of him.—Now, ere we lose,
Plunged in the vale, the distant views,
Turn thee, my love! look back once more
To the blue lake's retiring shore.
On its smooth breast the shadows seem
Like objects in a morning dream,
What time the slumberer is aware
He sleeps, and all the vision's air:
E'en so, on yonder liquid lawn,
In hues of bright reflection drawn,
Distinct the shaggy mountains lie,
Distinct the rocks, distinct the sky;
The summer-clouds so plain we note,
That we might count each dappled spot;
We gaze and we admire, yet know
The scene is all delusive show.
Such dreams of bliss would Arthur draw,
When first his Lucy's form he saw;
Yet sighed and sickened as he drew,
Despairing they could e'er prove true!

III.

But, Lucy, turn thee now, to view
Up the fair glen, our destined way;
The fairy path that we pursue,
Distinguished but by greener hue,
Winds round the purple brae,
While Alpine flowers of varied dye
For carpet serve, or tapestry.
See how the little runnels leap
In threads of silver down the steep,
To swell the brooklet's moan!
Seems that the Highland Naiad grieves,
Fantastic while her crown she weaves,
Of rowan, birch, and alder leaves,
So lovely, and so lone.
There's no illusion there; these flowers,
That wailing brook, these lovely bowers,
Are, Lucy, all our own;

* Beal-na-paish, the Vale of the Bridal.

And, since thine Arthur called thee wife,
Such seems the prospect of his life!
A lovely path, on-winding still,
By gurgling brook and sloping hill.
'Tis true, that mortals cannot tell
What waits them in the distant dell;
But be it hap, or be it harm,
We tread the pathway arm in arm.

IV.

And now, my Lucy, wot'st thou why
I could thy bidding twice deny,
When twice you prayed I would again
Resume the legendary strain
Of the bold Knight of Triermain?
At length yon peevish vow you swore,
That you would sue to me no more,
Until the minstrel fit drew near,
And made me prize a listening ear.
But, loveliest, when thou first didst pray
Continuance of the knightly lay,
Was it not on the happy day
That made thy hand mine own?
When, dizzied with mine ecstasy,
Nought past, or present, or to be,
Could I or think on, hear, or see,
Save, Lucy, thee alone!
A giddy draught my rapture was,
As ever chemist's magic gas.

V.

Again the summons I denied
In yon fair capital of Clyde;
My Harp—or let me rather choose
The good old classic form—my Muse,
(For Harp's an over-scutchèd phrase,
Worn out by bards of modern days,)
My Muse, then—seldom will she wake
Save by dim wood and silent lake;
She is a wild and rustic Maid,
Whose foot unsandalled loves to tread
Where the soft greensward is inlaid
With varied moss and thyme;
And, lest the simple lily-braid,
That coronets her temples, fade,
She hides her still in greenwood shade
To meditate her rhyme.

VI.

And now she comes! The murmur dear
Of the wild brook hath caught her ear,
The glade hath won her eye;
She longs to join with each blithe rill

That dances down the Highland hill,
Her blither melody.
And now, my Lucy's way to cheer,
She bids Ben-Cruach's echoes hear
How closed the tale, my love whilere
Loved for its chivalry.
List how she tells, in notes of flame,
"Child Roland to the dark tower came!"—

CANTO THIRD.

I.

BEWCASTLE now must keep the Hold,
Speir-Adam's steeds must bide in stall,
Of Hartley-burn the bowmen bold
Must only shoot from battled wall;
And Liddesdale may buckle spur,
And Teviot now may belt the brand,
Tarras and Ewes keep nightly stir,
And Eskdale foray Cumberland.
Of wasted fields and plundered flocks
The Borderers bootless may complain;
They lack the sword of brave De Vaux,
There comes no aid from Triermain.
That lord, on high adventure bound,
Hath wandered forth alone,
And day and night keeps watchful round
In the Valley of Saint John.

II.

When first began his vigil bold,
The moon twelve summer nights was old,
And shone both fair and full;
High in the vault of cloudless blue,
O'er streamlet, dale, and rock, she threw
Her light composed and cool.
Stretched on the brown hill's heathy breast,
Sir Roland eyed the vale;
Chief where, distinguished from the rest,
Those clustering rocks upreared their crest,
The dwelling of the Fair distressed,
As told grey Lyulph's tale.
Thus as he lay, the lamp of night
Was quivering on his armour bright,
In beams that rose and fell,
And danced upon his buckler's boss,
That lay beside him on the moss,
As on a crystal well.

III.

Ever he watched, and oft he deemed,
While on the mound the moonlight streamed,
It altered to his eyes;
Fain would he hope the rocks 'gan change
To buttressed walls their shapeless range,
Fain think, by transmutation strange,
He saw grey turrets rise.
But scarce his heart with hope throbbed high,
Before the wild illusions fly,
Which fancy had conceived,
Abetted by an anxious eye
That longed to be deceived.
It was a fond deception all,
Such as, in solitary hall,
Beguiles the musing eye,
When, gazing on the sinking fire,
Bulwark and battlement and spire
In the red gulf we spy.
For, seen by moon of middle night,
Or by the blaze of noontide bright,
Or by the dawn of morning light,
Or evening's western flame,
In every tide, at every hour,
In mist, in sunshine, and in shower,
The rocks remained the same.

IV.

Oft has he traced the charmèd mound,
Oft climbed its crest, or paced it round,
Yet nothing might explore,
Save that the crags so rudely piled,
At distance seen, resemblance wild
To a rough fortress bore.
Yet still his watch the Warrior keeps,
Feeds hard and spare, and seldom sleeps,
And drinks but of the well;
Ever by day he walks the hill,
And when the evening gale is chill,
He seeks a rocky cell,
Like hermit poor to bid his bead,
And tell his Ave and his Creed,
Invoking every Saint at need,
For aid to burst the spell.

V.

And now the moon her orb has hid,
And dwindled to a silver thread,
Dim seen in middle heaven,
While o'er its curve careering fast,
Before the fury of the blast
The midnight clouds are driven.

The brooklet raved, for on the hills
The upland showers had swoln the rills,
And down the torrents came;
Muttered the distant thunder dread,
And frequent o'er the vale was spread
A sheet of lightning flame.
De Vaux, within his mountain cave,
(No human step the storm durst brave,)
To moody meditation gave
Each faculty of soul,
Till, lulled by distant torrent sound,
And the sad winds that whistled round,
Upon his thoughts, in musing drowned,
A broken slumber stole.

VI.

'Twas then was heard a heavy sound,
(Sound, strange and fearful there to hear,
'Mongst desert hills, where, leagues around,
Dwelt but the gorcock* and the deer:)
As starting from his couch of fern,
Again he heard, in clangour stern,
That deep and solemn swell,
Twelve times, in measured tone, it spoke
Like some proud minster's pealing clock,
Or city's 'larum-bell.
What thought was Roland's, first when fell,
In that deep wilderness, the knell
Upon his startled ear?—
To slander warrior were I loth,
Yet must I hold my minstrel troth,—
It was a thought of fear.

VII.

But lively was the mingled thrill
That chased that momentary chill,
For Love's keen wish was there,
And eager Hope, and Valour high,
And the proud glow of Chivalry,
That burned to do and dare.
Forth from the cave the Warrior rushed,
Long ere the mountain-voice was hushed,
That answered to the knell;
For long and far the unwonted sound,
Eddying in echoes round and round,
Was tossed from fell to fell;
And Glaramara answer flung,
And Grisdale-pike responsive rung,
And Legbert heights their echoes swung,
As far as Derwent's dell.

* The red grouse.

VIII.

Forth upon trackless darkness gazed
The Knight, bedeafened and amazed,
Till all was hushed and still,
Save the swollen torrent's sullen roar,
And the night-blast that wildly bore
Its course along the hill.
Then on the northern sky there came
A light, as of reflected flame,
And over Legbert-head,
As if by magic art controlled,
A mighty Meteor slowly rolled
Its orb of fiery red;
Thou wouldst have thought some demon dire
Came mounted on that car of fire,
To do his errant dread.
Far on the sloping valley's course,
On thicket, rock, and torrent hoarse,
Shingle and Scrae,* and Fell and Force,†
A dusky light arose:
Displayed, yet altered, was the scene;
Dark rock, and brook of silver sheen,
Even the gay thicket's summer green,
In bloody tincture glows.

IX.

De Vaux had marked the sunbeams set
At eve, upon the coronet
Of that enchanted mound,
And seen but crags at random flung,
That, o'er the brawling torrent hung,
In desolation frowned.
What sees he by that meteor's lour?—
A bannered Castle, Keep, and Tower,
Return the lurid gleam;
With battled walls and buttress fa ,
And barbican‡ and ballium§ vast,
And airy flanking towers, that cast
Their shadows on the stream.
'Tis no deceit! distinctly clear
Crenell‖ and parapet appear,
While o'er the pile that meteor drear
Makes momentary pause;
Then forth its solemn path it drew,
And fainter yet and fainter grew
Those gloomy towers upon the view,
As its wild light withdraws.

* Bank of loose stones. † Waterfall.
‡ The outer defence of the castle gate.
§ Fortified court. ‖ Apertures for shooting arrows.

X.

Forth from the cave did Roland rush,
O'er crag and stream, through brier and bush;
Yet far he had not sped,
Ere sunk was that portentous light
Behind the hills, and utter night
Was on the valley spread.
He paused perforce,—and blew his horn,
And on the mountain-echoes borne
Was heard an answering sound,
A wild and lonely trumpet-note,
In middle air it seemed to float
High o'er the battled mound;
And sounds were heard, as when a guard
Of some proud castle, holding ward,
Pace forth their nightly round.
The valiant Knight of Triermain
Rung forth his challenge-blast again,
But answer came there none;
And, mid the mingled wind and rain
Darkling he sought the vale in vain,
Until the dawning shone;
And when it dawned, that wondrous sight,
Distinctly seen by meteor light,
It all had passed away!
And that enchanted mound once more
A pile of granite fragments bore,
As at the close of day.

XI.

Steeled for the deed, De Vaux's heart,
Scorned from his venturous quest to part,
He walks the vale once more;
But only sees, by night or day,
That shattered pile of rocks so grey,
Hears but the torrent's roar.
Till when, through hills of azure borne,
The moon renewed her silver horn,
Just at the time her waning ray
Had faded in the dawning day,
A summer mist arose;
Adown the vale the vapours float
And cloudy undulations moat
That tufted ground of mystic note,
As round its base they close.
And higher now the fleecy tide
Ascends its stern and shaggy side,
Until the airy billows hide
The rock's majestic isle:
It seemed a veil of filmy lawn,
By some fantastic fairy drawn
Around enchanted pile.

XII.

The breeze came softly down the brook,
And sighing as it blew,
The veil of silver mist it shook,
And to De Vaux's eager look
Renewed that wondrous view.
For, though the loitering vapour braved
The gentle breeze, yet oft it waved
Its mantle's dewy fold;
And still, when shook that filmy screen,
Were towers and bastions dimly seen,
And Gothic battlements between
Their gloomy length unrolled.
Speed, speed, De Vaux, ere on thine eye
Once more the fleeting vision die!—
The gallant Knight can speed
As prompt and light as, when the hound
Is opening, and the horn is wound,
Careers the hunter's steed.
Down the steep dell his course amain
Hath rivalled archer's shaft;
But ere the mound he could attain,
The rocks their shapeless form regain,
And mocking loud his labour vain,
The mountain spirits laughed,
Far up the echoing dell was borne
Their wild unearthly shout of scorn.

XIII.

Wroth waxed the Warrior.—"Am I then
Fooled by the enemies of men,
Like a poor hind, whose homeward way
Is haunted by malicious fay?
Is Triermain become your taunt,
De Vaux your scorn? False fiends, avaunt!"—
A weighty curtal-axe* he bare;
The baleful blade so bright and square,
And the tough shaft of heben† wood,
Were oft in Scottish gore imbrued.
Backward his stately form he drew,
And at the rocks the weapon threw,
Just were one crag's projected crest
Hung proudly balanced o'er the rest.
Hurled with main force, the weapon's shock
Rent a huge fragment of the rock.
If by mere strength 'twere hard to tell,
Or if the blow dissolved some spell,
But down the headlong ruin came,
With cloud of dust and flash of flame,
Down bank, o'er bush, its course was borne,
Crushed lay the copse, the earth was torn,

*A cutlass. †Ebony.

Till, stayed at length, the ruin dread
Cumbered the torrent's rocky bed,
And bade the waters' high-swoln tide
Seek other passage for its pride.

XIV.

When ceased that thunder, Triermain
Surveyed the mound's rude front again;
And lo! the ruin had laid bare,
Hewn in the stone, a winding stair,
Whose mossed and fractured steps might lend,
The means the summit to ascend,
And by whose aid, the brave De Vaux
Began to scale these magic rocks,
And soon a platform won,
Where, the wild witchery to close,
Within three lances' length arose
The Castle of Saint John!
No misty phantom of the air,
No meteor-blazoned show was there;
In morning splendour, full and fair,
The massive fortress shone.

XV.

Embattled high and proudly towered,
Shaded by ponderous flankers, lowered
The portal's gloomy way.
Though for six hundred years and more,
Its strength had brooked the tempest's roar.
The scutcheoned emblems that it bore
Had suffered no decay;
But from the eastern battlement
A turret had made sheer descent,
And down in recent ruin rent,
In the mid torrent lay.
Else, o'er the Castle's brow sublime,
Insults of violence or of time
Unfelt had passed away.
In shapeless characters of yore,
The gate this stern inscription bore:

XVI.

INSCRIPTION.

"Patience waits the destined day,
Strength can clear the cumbered way.
Warrior, who hast waited long,
Firm of soul, of sinew strong,
It is given to thee to gaze
On the pile of ancient days.
Never mortal builder's hand
This enduring fabric planned;
Sign and sigil, word of power,
From the earth raised keep and tower.

View it o'er, and pace it round,
Rampart, turret, battled mound;
Dare no more! to cross the gate
Were to tamper with thy fate;
Strength and fortitude were vain,
View it o'er—and turn again."

XVII.

"That would I," said the Warrior bold,
"If that my frame were bent and old,
And my thin blood dropped slow and cold
As icicle in thaw;
But while my heart can feel it dance,
Blithe as the sparkling wine of France,
And this good arm wields sword or lance,
I mock these words of awe!"
He said; the wicket felt the sway
Of his strong hand, and straight gave way
And, with rude crash and jarring bray,
The rusty bolts withdraw,
But o'er the threshold as he strode,
And forward took the vaulted road,
An unseen arm, with force amain,
The ponderous gate flung close again,
And rusted bolt and bar
Spontaneous took their place once more,
While the deep arch with sullen roar
Returned their surly jar.
"Now closed is the gin and the prey within,
By the Rood of Lanercost!
But he that would win the war-wolf's skin,
May rue him of his boast."—
Thus muttering, on the Warrior went,
By dubious light down steep descent.

XVIII.

Unbarred, unlocked, unwatched, a port
Led to the Castle's outer court;
There the main fortress, broad and tall,
Spread its long range of bower and hall,
And towers of varied size,
Wrought with each ornament extreme,
That Gothic art, in wildest dream
Of fancy, could devise.
But full between the Warrior's way
And the main portal arch, there lay
An inner moat;
Nor bridge nor boat
Affords De Vaux the means to cross
The clear, profound, and silent fosse.
His arms aside in haste he flings,
Cuirass of steel and hauberk rings,

And down falls helm, and down the shield,
Rough with the dints of many a field.
Fair was his manly form, and fair
His keen dark eye, and close curled hair,
When,—all unarmed, save that the brand
Of well-proved metal graced his hand,
With nought to fence his dauntless breast
But the close gipon's* under-vest,
Whose sullied buff the sable stains
Of hauberk and of mail retains,—
Roland De Vaux upon the brim
Of the broad moat stood prompt to swim.

XIX.

Accoutred thus he dared the tide,
And soon he reached the further side,
And entered soon the Hold,
And paced a hall, whose walls so wide
Were blazoned all with feats of pride,
By warriors done of old.
In middle lists they countered here,
While trumpets seemed to blow;
And there, in den or desert drear,
They quelled gigantic foe,
Braved the fierce griffon in his ire,
Or faced the dragon's breath of fire.
Strange in their arms, and strange in face,
Heroes they seemed of ancient race,
Whose deeds of arms, and race, and name,
Forgotten long by later fame,
Were here depicted to appal
Those of an age degenerate,
Whose bold intrusion braved their fate
In this enchanted hall.
For some short space, the venturous Knight
With these high marvels fed his sight;
Then sought the chamber's upper end,
Where three broad easy steps ascend
To an arched portal door,
In whose broad folding leaves of state
Was framed a wicket window-grate,
And ere he ventured more,
The gallant Knight took earnest view
The grated wicket-window through.

XX.

O, for his arms! Of martial weed
Had never mortal Knight such need!—
He spied a stately gallery; all
Of snow-white marble was the wall,
The vaulting, and the floor;

* A sort of doublet, worn beneath the armour.

And, contrast strange! on either hand
There stood arrayed in sable band,
Four Maids whom Afric bore;
And each a Lybian tiger led,
Held by as bright and frail a thread
As Lucy's golden hair,
For the leash that bound these monsters dread
Was but of gossamer.
Each Maiden's short barbaric vest
Left all unclosed the knee and breast,
And limbs of shapely jet;
White was their vest and turban's fold,
On arms and ankles rings of gold
In savage pomp were set;
A quiver on their shoulders lay,
And in their hand an assagay.
Such and so silent stood they there,
That Roland well-nigh hoped
He saw a band of statues rare,
Stationed the gazer's soul to scare;
But, when the wicket oped,
Each grisly beast 'gan upward draw,
Rolled his grim eye, and spread his claw,
Scented the air, and licked his jaw;
While these weird Maids, in Moorish tongue,
A wild and dismal warning sung:—

XXI.

"Rash Adventurer, bear thee back!
Dread the spell of Dahomay!
Fear the race of Zaharak,
Daughters of the burning day!

"When the whirlwind's gusts are wheeling,
Ours it is the dance to braid;
Zarah's sands in pillars reeling,
Join the measure that we tread;
When the Moon has donned her cloak,
And the stars are red to see,
Shrill when pipes the sad Siroc,
Music meet for such as we.

"Where the shattered columns lie,
Showing Carthage once had been,
If the wandering Santon's eye
Our mysterious rites has seen,—
Oft he cons the prayer of death,
To the nations preaches doom,
'Azrael's brand hath left the sheath,
Moslems, think upon the tomb!'—

"Ours the scorpion, ours the snake,
Ours the hydra of the fen,
Ours the tiger of the brake,
All that plagues the sons of men.

Ours the tempest's midnight wrack,
Pestilence that wastes by day—
Dread the race of Zaharak!
Fear the spell of Dahomay!"

XXII.

Uncouth and strange the accents shrill
Rung those vaulted roofs among,
Long it was ere, faint and still,
Died the far-resounded song.
While yet the distant echoes roll,
The Warrior communed with his soul:—
"When first I took this venturous quest,
I swore upon the rood,
Neither to stop, nor turn, nor rest,
For evil or for good.
My forward path too well I ween,
Lies yonder fearful ranks between;
For man unarmed, 'tis bootless hope
With tigers and with fiends to cope—
Yet, if I turn, what waits me there,
Save famine dire and fell despair?—
Other conclusion let me try,
Since, choose howe'er I list, I die.
Forward, lies faith and knightly fame;
Behind, are perjury and shame.
In life or death I hold my word!"—
With that he drew his trusty sword,
Caught down a banner from the wall,
And entered thus the fearful hall.

XXIII.

On high each wayward Maiden threw
Her swarthy arm, with wild halloo!
On either side a tiger sprung—
Against the leftward foe he flung
The ready banner, to engage
With tangling folds the brutal rage;
The right-hand monster in mid air
He struck so fiercely and so fair,
Through gullet and through spinal bone
The trenchant blade had sheerly gone.
His grisly brethren ramped and yelled,
But the slight leash their rage withheld,
Whilst, 'twixt their ranks, the dangerous road
Firmly, though swift, the champion strode.
Safe to the gallery's bound he drew,
Safe passed an open portal through;
And when 'gainst followers he flung
The gate, judge if the echoes rung!
Onward his daring course he bore,
While, mixed with dying growl and roar,
Wild jubilee and loud hurra
Pursued him on his venturous way.

XXIV.

"Hurra, hurra! Our watch is done!
We hail once more the tropic sun.
Pallid beams of northern day,
Farewell, farewell! Hurra, hurra!

"Five hundred years o'er this cold glen
Hath the pale sun come round agen;
Foot of man, till now, hath ne'er
Dared to cross the Hall of Fear.

"Warrior! thou, whose dauntless heart
Gives us from our ward to part,
Be as strong in future trial,
Where resistance is denial.

"Now for Afric's glowing sky,
Zwenga wide and Atlas high,
Zaharak and Dahomay!——
Mount the winds! Hurra, hurra!"—

XXV.

The wizard song at distance died
As if in ether borne astray,
While through waste halls and chambers wide
The Knight pursued his steady way,
Till to a lofty dome he came,
That flashed with such a brilliant flame,
As if the wealth of all the world
Were there in rich confusion hurled.
For here the gold, in sandy heaps,
With duller earth incorporate sleeps;
Was there in ingots piled, and there
Coined badge of empery it bare;
Yonder, huge bars of silver lay,
Dimmed by the diamond's neighbouring ray,
Like the pale moon in morning day;
And in the midst four Maidens stand,
The daughters of some distant land.
Their hue was of the dark-red dye,
That fringes oft a thunder sky;
Their hands palmetto baskets bare,
And cotton fillets bound their hair;
Slim was their form, their mien was shy,
To earth they bent the humbled eye,
Folded their arms, and suppliant kneeled,
And thus their proffered gifts revealed.

XXVI.

CHORUS.

"See the treasures Merlin piled,
Portion meet for Arthur's child.
Bathe in wealth's unbounded stream,
Wealth that Avarice ne'er could dream!"

FIRST MAIDEN.

"See these clots of virgin gold!
Severed from the sparry mould,
Nature's mystic alchemy
In the mine thus bade them lie;
And their orient smile can win
Kings to stoop, and saints to sin."—

SECOND MAIDEN.

"See these pearls, that long have slept;
These were tears by Naiads wept
For the loss of Marinel:
Tritons in the silver shell
Treasured them, till hard and white
As the teeth of Amphitrite."—

THIRD MAIDEN.

"Does a livelier hue delight?
Here are rubies blazing bright,
Here the emerald's fairy green,
And the topaz glows between;
Here their varied hues unite,
In the changeful chrysolite."—

FOURTH MAIDEN.

"Leave these gems of poorer shine,
Leave them all, and look on mine!
While their glories I expand,
Shade thine eyebrows with thy hand.
Mid-day sun and diamond's blaze
Blind the rash beholder's gaze."

CHORUS.

"Warrior, seize the splendid store;
Would 'twere all our mountains bore!
We should ne'er in future story,
Read, Peru, thy perished glory!"—

XXVII.

Calmly and unconcerned the Knight
Waved aside the treasures bright:
"Gentle Maidens, rise, I pray!
Bar not thus my destined way.
Let these boasted brilliant toys
Braid the hair of girls and boys!
Bid your streams of gold expand
O'er proud London's thirsty land.
De Vaux of wealth saw never need,
Save to purvey him arms and steed,
And all the ore he deigned to hoard
Inlays his helm, and hilts his sword."—
Thus gently parting from their hold,
He left, unmoved, the dome of gold.

XXVIII.

And now the morning sun was high,
De Vaux was weary, faint and dry;
When lo! a plashing sound he hears,
A gladsome signal that he nears
Some frolic water-run;
And soon he reached a court-yard square,
Where, dancing in the sultry air,
Tossed high aloft, a fountain fair
Was sparkling in the sun.
On right and left, a fair arcade,
In long perspective view displayed,
Alleys and bowers, for sun or shade;
But, full in front, a door,
Low-browed and dark, seemed as it led
To the lone dwelling of the dead,
Whose memory was no more.

XXIX.

Here stopped De Vaux an instant's space,
To bathe his parchèd lips and face,
And marked with well-pleased eye,
Refracted on the fountain stream,
In rainbow hues the dazzling beam
Of that gay summer sky.
His senses felt a mild control,
Like that which lulls the weary soul,
From contemplation high
Relaxing, when the ear receives
The music that the greenwood leaves
Make to the breezes' sigh.

XXX.

And oft, in such a dreamy mood,
The half-shut eye can frame
Fair apparitions in the wood,
As if the Nymphs of field and flood
In gay procession came.
Are these of such fantastic mould,
Seen distant down the fair arcade,
These Maids enlinked in sister-fold,
Who, late at bashful distance stayed,
Now tripping from the greenwood shade,
Nearer the musing champion draw,
And, in a pause of seeming awe,
Again stand doubtful now?—
Ah, that sly pause of witching powers!
That seems to say, "To please be ours,
Be yours to tell us how."—
Their hue was of the golden glow
That suns of Candahar bestow,

O'er which in slight suffusion flows
A frequent tinge of paly rose;
Their limbs were fashioned fair and free,
In Nature's justest symmetry,
And, wreathed with flowers, with odours graced,
Their raven ringlets reached the waist;
In eastern pomp, its gilding pale
The hennah lent each shapely nail,
And the dark sumah gave the eye
More liquid and more lustrous dye.
The spotless veil of misty lawn,
In studied disarrangement, drawn
The form and bosom o'er,
To win the eye, or tempt the touch,
For modesty showed all too much—
Too much—yet promised more.

XXXI.

"Gentle Knight, awhile delay,"
Thus they sung, "thy toilsome way,
While we pay the duty due
To our Master and to you.
Over Avarice, over Fear,
Love triumphant led thee here;
Warrior, list to us, for we
Are slaves to Love, are friends to thee.

"Though no treasured gems have we,
To proffer on the bended knee,
Though we boast nor arm nor heart,
For the assagay or dart,
Swains have given each simple girl
Ruby lip and teeth of pearl;
Or, if dangers more you prize,
Flatterers find them in our eyes.

"Stay, then, gentle Warrior, stay
Rest till evening steal on day;
Stay, O, stay!—in yonder bowers
We will braid thy locks with flowers,
Spread the feast and fill the wine,
Charm thy ear with sounds divine,
Weave our dances till delight
Yield to languor, day to night.

"Then shall she you most approve,
Sing the lays that best you love,
Soft thy mossy couch shall spread,
Watch thy pillow, prop thy head,
Till the weary night be o'er—
Gentle Warrior, wouldst thou more!—
Wouldst thou more, fair Warrior,—she
Is slave to Love and slave to thee."—

XXXII.

O do not hold it for a crime
In the bold hero of my rhyme,
For stoic look,
And meet rebuke,
He lacked the heart or time!
As round the band of syrens trip,
He kissed one damsel's laughing lip,
And pressed another's proffered hand,
Spoke to them all in accents bland,
But broke their magic circle through;
"Kind Maids," said he, "adieu, adieu!
My fate, my fortune, forward lies."—
He said, and vanished from their eyes;
But, as he dared that darksome way,
Still heard behind their lovely lay:
"Fair Flower of Courtesy, depart!
Go, where the feelings of the heart
With the warm pulse in concord move;
Go, where Virtue sanctions love!"—

XXXIII.

Downward De Vaux through darksome ways
And ruined vaults has gone,
Till issue from their wildered maze,
Or safe retreat seemed none,
And e'en the dismal path he strays
Grew worse as he went on.
For cheerful sun, for living air,
Foul vapours rise and mine-fires glare,
Whose fearful light the dangers showed
That dogged him on that dreadful road.
Deep pits, and lakes of waters dun,
They showed, but showed not how to shun.
These scenes of desolate despair,
These smothering clouds of poisoned air,
How gladly had De Vaux exchanged,
Though 'twere to face yon tigers ranged!
Nay, soothful bards have said,
So perilous his state seemed now,
He wished him under arbour bough
With Asia's willing maid.
When, joyful sound! at distance near
A trumpet flourished loud and clear,
And as it ceased, a lofty lay
Seemed thus to chide his lagging way:—

XXXIV.

"Son of Honour, theme of story,
Think on the reward before ye!
Danger, darkness, toil despise;
'Tis Ambition bids thee rise.

"He, that would her heights ascend,
Many a weary step must wend;
Hand and foot and knee he tries:
Thus Ambition's minions rise.

"Lag not now, though rough the way,
Fortune's mood brooks no delay;
Grasp the boon that's spread before ye,
Monarch's power, and Conqueror's glory!"—

It ceased. Advancing on the sound,
A steep ascent the wanderer found,
And then a turret stair:
Nor climbed he far its steepy round
Till fresher blew the air,
And next a welcome glimpse was given,
That cheered him with the light of heaven.
At length his toil had won
A lofty hall with trophies dressed,
Where, as to greet imperial guest,
Four Maidens stood, whose crimson vest
Was bound with golden zone.

XXXV.

Of Europe seemed the damsels all;
The first a nymph of lively Gaul,
Whose easy step and laughing eye
Her borrowed air of awe belie;
The next a maid of Spain,
Dark-eyed, dark-haired, sedate, yet bold;
While ivory skin and tress of gold,
Her shy and bashful comrade told
For daughter of Almaine.
These Maidens bore a royal robe,
With crown, with sceptre, and with globe,
Emblems of empery;
The fourth a space behind them stood;
And leant upon a harp, in mood
Of minstrel ecstasy.
Of merry England she, in dress
Like ancient British Druidess;
Her hair an azure fillet bound,
Her graceful vesture swept the ground,
And, in her hand displayed,
A crown did that fourth Maiden hold,
But unadorned with gems and gold,
Of glossy laurel made.

XXXVI.

At once to brave De Vaux knelt down
These foremost Maidens three,
And proffered sceptre, robe, and crown,
Liegedom and seignorie

O'er many a region wide and fair,
Destined, they said, for Arthur's heir;
But homage would he none:—
"Rather," he said, "De Vaux would ride,
A Warden of the Border-side,
In plate and mail, than, robed in pride,
A monarch's empire own;
Rather, far rather, would he be
A free-born Knight of England free,
Than sit on Despot's throne."
So passed he on, when that fourth Maid,
As starting from a trance,
Upon the harp her fingers laid;
Her magic touch the chords obeyed,
Their soul awaked at once!

SONG OF THE FOURTH MAIDEN.

"Quake to your foundations deep,
Stately Towers, and bannered Keep!
Bid your vaulted echoes moan,
As the dreaded step they own.

"Fiends! that wait on Merlin's spell,
Hear the foot-fall! mark it well!
Spread your dusky wings abroad,
Boune ye for your homeward road!

"It is His, the first who e'er
Dared the dismal Hall of Fear;
His, who hath the snares defied
Spread by Pleasure, Wealth, and Pride.

"Quake to your foundations deep,
Bastion huge, and Turret steep!
Tremble Keep, and totter Tower!
This is Gyneth's waking hour."—

XXXVII.

Thus while she sung, the venturous Knight
Has reached a bower, where milder light
Through crimson curtains fell;
Such softened shade the hill receives,
Her purple veil when twilight leaves
Upon its western swell.
That bower, the gazer to bewitch,
Hath wondrous store of rare and rich
As e'er was seen with eye;
For there by magic skill, I wis,
Form of each thing that living is
Was limned in proper dye.
All seemed to sleep—the timid hare
On form, the stag upon his lair,
The eagle in her eyrie fair
Between the earth and sky.

But what of pictured rich and rare
Could win De Vaux's eye-glance, where,
Deep slumbering in the fatal chair,
He saw King Arthur's child!
Doubt, and anger, and dismay,
From her brow had passed away,
Forgot was that fell tourney-day,
For, as she slept, she smiled.
It seemed that the repentant Seer
Her sleep of many a hundred year
With gentle dreams beguiled.

XXXVIII.

That form of maiden loveliness,
'Twixt childhood and 'twixt youth,
That ivory chair, that sylvan dress,
The arms and ankles bare, express
Of Lyulph's tale the truth.
Still upon her garment's hem
Vanoc's blood made purple gem,
And the warder of command
Cumbered still her sleeping hand;
Still her dark locks dishevelled flow
From net of pearl o'er breast of snow;
And so fair the slumberer seems,
That De Vaux impeached his dreams,
Vapid all and void of might,
Hiding half her charms from sight.
Motionless awhile he stands,
Folds his arms and clasps his hands,
Trembling in his fitful joy,
Doubtful how he shall destroy
Long-enduring spell;
Doubtful too, when slowly rise
Dark-fringed lids of Gyneth's eyes,
What these eyes shall tell.
"St. George! St. Mary! can it be,
That they will kindly look on me!"—

XXXIX.

Gently, lo! the Warrior kneels,
Soft that lovely hand he steals,
Soft to kiss, and soft to clasp—
But the warder leaves her grasp;
Lightning flashes, rolls the thunder!
Gyneth startles from her sleep,
Totters tower, and trembles keep,
Burst the Castle walls asunder!
Fierce and frequent were the shocks,
Melt the magic halls away,—
——But beneath their mystic rocks,
In the arms of bold De Vaux,
Safe the Princess lay!

Safe and free from magic power,
Blushing like the rose's flower
Opening to the day;
And round the Champion's brows were bound
The crown that Druidess had wound,
Of the green laurel-bay.

And this was what remained of all
The wealth of each enchanted hall,
The Garland and the Dame:—
But where should Warrior seek the meed,
Due to high worth for daring deed,
Except from LOVE and FAME!

CONCLUSION.

I.

MY LUCY, when the maid is won,
The Minstrel's task, thou know'st, is done;
And to require of bard
That to the dregs his tale should run,
Were ordinance too hard.
Our lovers, briefly be it said,
Wedded as lovers wont to wed,
When tale or play is o'er;
Lived long and blessed, loved fond and true,
And saw a numerous race renew
The honours that they bore.
Know, too, that when a pilgrim strays,
In morning mist or evening maze,
Along the mountain lone,
That fairy fortress often mocks
His gaze upon the castled rocks
Of the Valley of St. John;
But never man since brave De Vaux
The charmèd portal won:
'Tis now a vain illusive show,
That melts whene'er the sunbeams glow
Or the fresh breeze hath blown.

II.

But see, my love, where far below
Our lingering wheels are moving slow,
The whiles up-gazing still,
Our menials eye our steepy way,
Marvelling, perchance, what whim can stay
Our steps when eve is sinking grey
On this gigantic hill.

So think the vulgar—Life and time
Ring all their joys in one dull chime
Of luxury and ease;
And O! beside these simple knaves,
How many better born are slaves
To such coarse joys as these;
Dead to the nobler sense that glows
When Nature's grander scenes unclose.
But, Lucy, we will love them yet,
The mountain's misty coronet,
The greenwood, and the wold;
And love the more, that of their maze
Adventure high of other days
By ancient bards is told,
Bringing, perchance, like my poor tale,
Some moral truth in fiction's veil:
Nor love them less, that o'er the hill
The evening breeze, as now, comes chill.
My love shall wrap her warm,
And, fearless of the slippery way,
While safe she trips the heathy brae,
Shall hang on Arthur's arm.

X

THE

LORD OF THE ISLES.

A Poem.

IN SIX CANTOS

First published January 2, 1815.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Scene of this Poem lies, at first, in the Castle of Artornish, on the coast of Argyleshire; and, afterwards, in the Islands of Skye and Arran, and upon the coast of Ayrshire. Finally, it is laid near Stirling. The story opens in the spring of the year 1307, when Bruce, who had been driven out of Scotland by the English, and the Barons who adhered to that foreign interest, returned from the Island of Rachrin, on the coast of Ireland, again to assert his claims to the Scottish crown. Many of the personages and incidents introduced are of historical celebrity. The authorities used are chiefly those of the venerable Lord Hailes, as well entitled to be called the restorer of Scottish history, as Bruce the restorer of Scottish monarchy; and of Archdeacon Barbour, a correct edition of whose Metrical History of Robert Bruce will soon, I trust, appear under the care of my learned friend, the Rev. Dr. Jamieson.

ABBOTSFORD, 10*th December*, 1814.

THE

LORD OF THE ISLES.

CANTO FIRST.

Autumn departs—but still his mantle's fold
Rests on the groves of noble Somerville,
Beneath a shroud of russet dropped with gold
Tweed and his tributaries mingle still;
Hoarser the wind, and deeper sounds the rill,
Yet lingering notes of sylvan music swell,
The deep-toned cushat, and the redbreast shrill;
And yet some tints of summer splendour tell
When the broad sun sinks down on Ettricke's western fell.

Autumn departs—from Gala's fields no more
Come rural sounds our kindred banks to cheer;
Blent with the stream, and gale that wafts it o'er,
No more the distant reapers' mirth we hear.
The last blithe shout hath died upon our ear,
And harvest-home hath hushed the clanging wain,
On the waste hill no forms of life appear,
Save where, sad laggard of the autumnal train,
Some age-struck wanderer gleans few ears of scattered grain.

Deem'st thou these saddened scenes have pleasure still,
Lovest thou through Autumn's fading realms to stray,
To see the heath-flower withered on the hill,
To listen to the woods' expiring lay,
To note the red leaf shivering on the spray,
To mark the last bright tints the mountain stain,
On the waste fields to trace the gleaner's way,
And moralize on mortal joy and pain?—
O! if such scenes thou lovest, scorn not the minstrel strain!

No! do not scorn, although its hoarser note
Scarce with the cushat's homely song can vie,
Though faint its beauties as the tints remote
That gleam through mist in autumn's evening sky,

And few as leaves that tremble, sear and dry,
When wild November hath his bugle wound;
Nor mock my toil—a lonely gleaner I,
Through fields time-wasted, on sad inquest bound,
Where happier bards of yore have richer harvest found.

So shalt thou list, and haply not unmoved,
To a wild tale of Albyn's warrior day;
In distant lands, by the rough West reproved,
Still live some reliques of the ancient lay.
For, when on Coolin's hills the lights decay,
With such the Seer of Skye the eve beguiles,
'Tis known amid the pathless wastes of Reay,
In Harries known, and in Iona's piles,
Where rest from mortal coil the Mighty of the Isles.

I.

"WAKE, Maid of Lorn!" the Minstrels sung,
Thy rugged halls, Artornish!* rung,
And the dark seas, thy towers that lave,
Heaved on the beach a softer wave,
As 'mid the tuneful choir to keep
The diapason of the Deep.
Lulled were the winds on Inninmore,
And green Loch-Alline's woodland shore,

* The ruins of the castle of Artornish are situated upon a promontory, on the Morven, or mainland side of the Sound of Mull, a name given to the deep arm of the sea, which divides that island from the continent. The situation is wild and romantic in the highest degree, having on the one hand a high and precipitous chain of rocks overhanging the sea, and on the other the narrow entrance to the beautiful salt-water lake called Loch-Alline, which is in many places finely fringed with copse-wood. The ruins of Artornish are not now very considerable, and consist chiefly of the remains of an old keep, or tower, with fragments of outward defences. But, in former days, it was a place of great consequence, being one of the principal strongholds which the Lords of the Isles, during the period of their stormy independence, possessed upon the mainland of Argyleshire. Here they assembled what popular tradition calls their parliaments, meaning, I suppose, their *cour plenière*, or assembly of feudal and patriarchal vassals and dependants. From this castle of Artornish, upon the 19th day of October, 1461, John de Yle, designing himself Earl of Ross and Lord of the Isles, granted, in the style of an independent sovereign, a commission to his trusty and well-beloved cousins, Ronald of the Isles, and Duncan, arch-dean of the Isles, for empowering them to enter into a treaty with the most excellent prince Edward, by the grace of God, king of France and England, and lord of Ireland. Edward IV., on his part, named deputies and commissioners, to confer with those named by the Lord of the Isles. The conference terminated in a treaty, by which the Lord of the Isles agreed to become a vassal to the crown of England, and to assist Edward IV. and James earl of Douglas, then in banishment, in subduing the realm of Scotland. The castle of Artornish is almost opposite to the bay of Aros, in the island of Mull, where there was another castle the occasional residence of the Lord of the Isles.

As if wild woods and waves had pleasure
In listing to the lovely measure.
And ne'er to symphony more sweet
Gave mountain echoes answer meet,
Since, met from mainland and from isle,
Ross, Arran, Ilay, and Argyle,
Each minstrel's tributary lay
Paid homage to the festal day.
Dull and dishonoured were the bard,
Worthless of guerdon and regard,
Deaf to the hope of minstrel fame,
Or lady's smiles, his noblest aim,
Who on that morn's resistless call
Was silent in Artornish hall.

II.

"Wake, Maid of Lorn!" 'twas thus they sung,
And yet more proud the descant rung,
"Wake, Maid of Lorn! high right is ours,
To charm dull sleep from Beauty's bowers;
Earth, Ocean, Air, have nought so shy
But owns the power of minstrelsy.
In Lettermore the timid deer
Will pause, the harp's wild chime to hear;
Rude Heiskar's seal* through surges dark
Will long pursue the minstrel's bark;
To list his notes, the eagle proud
Will poise him on Ben-Cailliach's cloud;
Then let not Maiden's ear disdain
The summons of the minstrel train,
But, while our harps wild music make,
Edith of Lorn, awake, awake!

III.

"O wake, while Dawn, with dewy shine,
Wakes Nature's charms to vie with thine!
She bids the mottled thrush rejoice
To mate thy melody of voice;
The dew that on the violet lies
Mocks the dark lustre of thine eyes:
But, Edith, wake, and all we see
Of sweet and fair shall yield to thee!"—
"She comes not yet," grey Ferrand cried;
"Brethren, let softer spell be tried,
Those notes prolonged, that soothing theme,
Which best may mix with Beauty's dream,
And whisper, with their silvery tone,
The hope she loves, yet fears to own."—
He spoke, and on the harp-strings died
The strains of flattery and of pride;

* Seals display a taste for music, and will long follow a boat in which any musical instrument is played; and even a tune simply whistled has attractions for them.

More soft, more low, more tender fell
The lay of love he bade them tell.

IV.

"Wake, Maid of Lorn! the moments fly,
Which yet that maiden-name allow;
Wake, Maiden, wake! the hour is nigh,
When Love shall claim a plighted vow.
By Fear, thy bosom's fluttering guest,
By Hope, that soon shall fears remove,
We bid thee break the bonds of rest,
And wake thee at the call of Love!

"Wake, Edith, wake! in yonder bay
Lies many a galley gaily manned,
We hear the merry pibrochs play,
We see the streamers' silken band.
What Chieftain's praise these pibrochs swell,
What crest is on these banners wove,
The harp, the minstrel, dare not tell—
The riddle must be read by Love."

V.

Retired her maiden train among,
Edith of Lorn received the song,
But tamed the Minstrel's pride had been
That had her cold demeanour seen;
For not upon her cheek awoke
The glow of pride when Flattery spoke,
Nor could their tenderest numbers bring
One sigh responsive to the string.
As vainly had her maidens vied
In skill to deck the princely bride.
Her locks, in dark-brown length arrayed,
Cathleen of Ulne, 'twas thine to braid;
Young Eva with meet reverence drew
On the light foot the silken shoe,
While on the ankle's slender round
Those strings of pearl fair Bertha wound,
That, bleached Lochryan's depth within,
Seemed dusky still on Edith's skin.
But Einion, of experience old,
Had weightiest task—the mantle's fold
In many an artful plait she tied,
To show the form it seemed to hide,
Till on the floor descending rolled
Its waves of crimson blent with gold.

VI.

O! lives there now so cold a maid,
Who thus in beauty's pomp arrayed,
In beauty's proudest pitch of power,
And conquest won—the bridal hour—

With every charm that wins the heart,
By Nature given, enhanced by Art,
Could yet the fair reflection view,
In the bright mirror pictured true,
And not one dimple on her cheek
A tell-tale consciousness bespeak?—
Lives still such maid?—Fair damsels, say,
For further vouches not my lay,
Save that such lived in Britain's isle,
When Lorn's bright Edith scorned to smile.

VII.

But Morag, to whose fostering care
Proud Lorn had given his daughter fair,
Morag, who saw a mother's aid
By all a daughter's love repaid,
(Strict was that bond—most kind of all—
Inviolate in Highland hall—)
Grey Morag sate a space apart,
In Edith's eyes to read her heart.
In vain the attendants' fond appeal
To Morag's skill, to Morag's zeal;
She marked her child receive their care,
Cold as the image sculptured fair,
(Form of some sainted patroness,)
Which cloistered maids combine to dress;
She marked—and knew her nursling's heart
In the vain pomp took little part.
Wistful a while she gazed—then pressed
The maiden to her anxious breast
In finished loveliness—and led
To where a turret's airy head,
Slender and steep, and battled round,
O'erlooked, dark Mull! thy mighty Sound,*
Where thwarting tides, with mingled roar,
Part thy swarth hills from Morvern's shore.

* The Sound of Mull, which divides that island from the continent of Scotland, is one of the most striking scenes which the Hebrides afford to the traveller. Sailing from Oban to Aros, or Tobermory, through a narrow channel, yet deep enough to bear vessels of the largest burthen, he has on his left the bold and mountainous shores of Mull; on the right those of that district of Argyleshire called Morven or Morvern, successively indented by deep saltwater lochs, running up many miles inland. To the south-eastward arises a prodigious range of mountains, among which Cruachan Ben is pre-eminent. And to the north-east is the no less huge and picturesque range of the Ardnamurchan hills. Many ruinous castles, situated generally upon cliffs overhanging the ocean, add interest to the scene. Those of Dunolly and Dunstaffnage are first passed, then that of Duart, formerly belonging to the chief of the warlike and powerful sept of Macleans, and the scene of Miss Baillie's beautiful tragedy, entitled the Family Legend. Still passing on to the northward, Artornish and Aros become visible upon the opposite shores, and lastly, Mingarry, and other ruins of less-distinguished note.

VIII.

"Daughter," she said, "these seas behold,
Round twice a hundred islands* rolled,
From Hirt, that hears their northern roar,
To the green Ilay's fertile shore;
Or mainland turn, where many a tower
Owns thy bold father's feudal power,
Each on its own dark cape reclined,
And listening to its own wild wind,
From where Mingarry,† sternly placed,
O'erawes the woodland and the waste,
To where Dunstaffnage hears the raging
Of Connal with his rocks engaging.
Think'st thou, amid this ample round,
A single brow but thine has frowned,
To sadden this auspicious morn,
That bids the daughter of high Lorn
Impledge her spousal faith to wed
The Heir of mighty Somerled;‡
Ronald, from many a hero sprung,
The fair, the valiant, and the young,
LORD OF THE ISLES,§ whose lofty name
A thousand bards have given to fame,

*The number of the western isles of Scotland exceeds two hundred.

†The castle of Mingarry is situated on the sea-coast of the district of Ardnamurchan. The ruins, which are tolerably entire, are surrounded by a very high wall, forming a kind of polygon, for the purpose of adapting itself to the projecting angles of a precipice overhanging the sea, on which the castle stands. It was anciently the residence of the MacIans, a clan of MacDonalds, descended from Ian, or John, a grandson of Angus Og, Lord of the Isles.

‡Somerled was thane of Argyle and Lord of the Isles, about the middle of the twelfth century. He seems to have exercised his authority in both capacities, independent of the crown of Scotland, against which he often stood in hostility. He made various incursions upon the western Lowlands during the reign of Malcolm IV., and seems to have made peace with him upon the terms of an independent prince, about the year 1157. In 1164 he resumed the war against Malcolm, and invaded Scotland with a large, but probably a tumultuary army, collected in the Isles, in the mainland of Argyleshire, and in the neighbouring provinces of Ireland. He was defeated and slain in an engagement with a very inferior force, near Renfrew. His son Gillicolane fell in the same battle. This mighty chieftain married a daughter of Olaus, King of Man. From him our genealogists deduce two dynasties, distinguished in the stormy history of the middle ages; the Lords of the Isles descended from his elder son Ronald, and the Lords of Lorn, who took their surname of M'Dougal, as descended of his second son Dougal.

§The representative of this independent principality, for such it seems to have been, though acknowledging occasionally the pre-eminence of the Scottish crown, was, at the period of the poem, Angus, called Angus Og; but the name has been, *euphoniæ gratiâ*, exchanged for that of Ronald, which frequently occurs in the genealogy. Angus was a protector of Robert Bruce, whom he received in his castle of Dunnaverty, during the time of his greatest distress.

The mate of monarchs, and allied
On equal terms with England's pride.—
From chieftain's tower to bondsman's cot,
Who hears the tale, and triumphs not?
The damsel dons her best attire,
The shepherd lights his beltane fire,
Joy, Joy! each warder's horn hath sung,
Joy, Joy! each matin bell hath rung;
The holy priest says grateful mass,
Loud shouts each hardy galla-glass,*
No mountain den holds outcast boor,
Of heart so dull, of soul so poor,
But he hath flung his task aside,
And claimed this morn for holy-tide;
Yet, empress of this joyful day,
Edith is sad while all are gay."—

IX.

Proud Edith's soul came to her eye,
Resentment checked the struggling sigh,
Her hurrying hand indignant dried
The burning tears of injured pride—
"Morag, forbear! or lend thy praise
To swell yon hireling harpers' lays;
Make to yon maids thy boast of power,
That they may waste a wondering hour,
Telling of banners proudly borne,
Of pealing bell and bugle-horn,
Or, theme more dear, of robes of price,
Crownlets and gawds of rare device.
But thou, experienced as thou art,
Think'st thou with these to cheat the heart,
That, bound in strong affection's chain,
Looks for return and looks in vain?
No! sum thine Edith's wretched lot
In these brief words—He loves her not!

X.

"Debate it not—too long I strove
To call his cold observance love,
All blinded by the league that styled
Edith of Lorn,—while, yet a child,
She tripped the heath by Morag's side,—
The brave Lord Ronald's destined bride.
Ere yet I saw him, while afar
His broadsword blazed in Scotland's war,
Trained to believe our fates the same,
My bosom throbbed when Ronald's name
Came gracing Fame's heroic tale,
Like perfume on the summer gale.
What pilgrim sought our halls, nor told
Of Ronald's deeds in battle bold;

* See "Macbeth," act i. scene 2.

Who touched the harp to heroes' praise,
But his achievements swelled the lays?
Even Morag—not a tale of fame
Was hers but closed with Ronald's name.
He came! and all that had been told
Of his high worth seemed poor and cold,
Tame, lifeless, void of energy,
Unjust to Ronald and to me!

XI.

"Since then, what thought had Edith's heart,
And gave not plighted love its part!—
And what requital? cold delay—
Excuse that shunned the spousal day.—
It dawns, and Ronald is not here!—
Hunts he Bentalla's nimble deer,
Or loiters he in secret dell
To bid some lighter love farewell,
And swear that though he may not scorn
A daughter of the House of Lorn,*
Yet, when these formal rites are o'er,
Again they meet, to part no more?"—

XII.

—"Hush, daughter, hush! thy doubts remove,
More nobly think of Ronald's love.
Look, where beneath the castle grey
His fleet unmoor from Aros-bay!
Seest not each galley's topmast bend,
As on the yards the sails ascend?
Hiding the dark-blue land they rise,
Like the white clouds on April skies;
The shouting vassals man the oars,
Behind them sink Mull's mountain shores,
Onward their merry course they keep,
Through whistling breeze and foaming deep.
And mark the headmost, seaward cast,
Stoop to the freshening gale her mast,
As if she vailed† its bannered pride,
To greet afar her prince's bride!
Thy Ronald comes, and while in speed
His galley mates the flying steed,
He chides her sloth!"—Fair Edith sighed,
Blushed, sadly smiled, and thus replied:—

* The house of Lorn was, like that of the Lords of the Isles, descended from a son of Somerled, slain at Renfrew, in 1164. This son obtained the succession of his mainland territories, comprehending the greater part of the three districts of Lorn, in Argyleshire, and the possessors of such extensive authority of course might rather be considered as petty princes, than feudal barons. They assumed the patronymic appellation of MacDougal, by which they are distinguished in the history of the middle ages.

† An old word, signifying "lowered."

XIII.

"Sweet thought, but vain!—No, Morag! mark,
Type of his course, yon lonely bark,
That oft hath shifted helm and sail,
To win its way against the gale.
Since peep of morn, my vacant eyes
Have viewed by fits the course she tries;
Now, though the darkening scud comes on,
And dawn's fair promises be gone,
And though the weary crew may see
Our sheltering haven on their lee,
Still closer to the rising wind
They strive her shivering sail to bind,
Still nearer to the shelves' dread verge
At every tack her course they urge,
As if they feared Artornish more
Than adverse winds and breakers' roar."—

XIV.

Sooth spoke the Maid.—Amid the tide
The skiff she marked lay tossing sore,
And shifted oft her stooping side,
In weary tack from shore to shore.
Yet on her destined course no more
She gained of forward way,
Than what a minstrel may compare
With the poor meed which peasants share,
Who toil the live-long day;
And such the risk her pilot braves,
That oft, before she wore,
Her boltsprit kissed the broken waves,
Where in white foam the ocean raves
Upon the shelving shore.
Yet, to their destined purpose true,
Undaunted toiled her hardy crew,
Nor looked where shelter lay,
Nor for Artornish Castle drew,
Nor steered for Aros-bay.

XV.

Thus while they strove with wind and seas,
Borne onward by the willing breeze,
Lord Ronald's fleet swept by,
Streamered with silk, and tricked with gold,
Manned with the noble and the bold
Of Island chivalry.
Around their prows the ocean roars,
And chafes beneath their thousand oars,
Yet bears them on their way:
So fumes the war-horse in his might,
That field-ward bears some valiant knight,
Champs till both bit and boss are white,
But, foaming, must obey.

On each gay deck they might behold
Lances of steel and crests of gold,
And hauberks with their burnished fold,
That summered fair and free;
And each proud galley, as she passed,
To the wild cadence of the blast
Gave wilder minstrelsy.
Full many a shrill triumphant note
Saline and Scallastle bade float
Their misty shores around;
And Morven's echoes answered well,
And Duart heard the distant swell
Come down the darksome Sound.

XVI.

So bore they on with mirth and pride,
And if that labouring bark they spied,
'Twas with such idle eye
As nobles cast on lowly boor,
When, toiling in his task obscure,
They pass him careless by.
Let them sweep on with heedless eyes!
But, had they known what mighty prize
In that frail vessel lay,
The famished wolf that prowls the wold,
Had scathless passed the unguarded fold,
Ere, drifting by these galleys bold,
Unchallenged were her way!
And thou, Lord Ronald, sweep thou on,
With mirth and pride and minstrel tone!
But hadst thou known who sailed so nigh,
Far other glance were in thine eye!
Far other flush were on thy brow,
That, shaded by the bonnet, now
Assumes but ill the blithesome cheer
Of bridegroom when the bride is near!

XVII.

Yes, sweep they on!—We will not leave,
For them that triumph, those who grieve.
With that armada gay
Be laughter loud and jocund shout,
And bards to cheer the wassail rout,
With tale, romance, and lay;
And of wild mirth each clamorous art,
Which, if it cannot cheer the heart,
May stupefy and stun its smart,
For one loud busy day.
Yes, sweep they on!—But with that skiff
Abides the minstrel tale,
Where there was dread of surge and cliff,
And toil that strained each sinew stiff,
And one sad Maiden's wail.

XVIII.

All day with fruitless strife they toiled,
With eve the ebbing currents boiled
More fierce from strait and lake;
And midway through the channel met
Conflicting tides that foam and fret,
And high their mingled billows jet,
As spears, that, in the battle set,
Spring upward as they break.
Then too the lights of eve were past,
And louder sung the western blast
On rocks of Inninmore;
Rent was the sail, and strained the mast,
And many a leak was gaping fast,
And the pale steersman stood aghast,
And gave the conflict o'er.

XIX.

'Twas then that One, whose lofty look
Nor labour dulled nor terror shook,
Thus to the Leader spoke:
"Brother, how hopest thou to abide
The fury of this wildered tide,
Or how avoid the rock's rude side,
Until the day has broke?
Didst thou not mark the vessel reel,
With quivering planks, and groaning keel,
At the last billow's shock?
Yet how of better counsel tell,
Though here thou seest poor Isabel
Half-dead with want and fear;
For look on sea, or look on land,
Or yon dark sky, on every hand
Despair and death are near.
For her alone I grieve—on me
Danger sits light by land and sea,
I follow where thou wilt;
Either to bide the tempest's lour,
Or wend to yon unfriendly tower,
Or rush amid their naval power,
With war-cry wake their wassail-hour,
And die with hand on hilt."—

XX.

That elder Leader's calm reply
In steady voice was given,
"In man's most dark extremity
Oft succour dawns from Heaven.
Edward, trim thou the shattered sail,
The helm be mine and down the gale
Let our free course be driven;
So shall we 'scape the western bay,

The hostile fleet, the unequal fray,
So safely hold our vessel's way
Beneath the Castle wall;
For if a hope of safety rest,
'Tis on the sacred name of guest,
Who seeks for shelter, storm-distressed,
Within a chieftain's hall.
If not—it best beseems our worth,
Our name, our right, our lofty birth,
By noble hands to fall."—

XXI.

The helm, to his strong arm consigned,
Gave the reefed sail to meet the wind,
And on her altered way,
Fierce bounding, forward sprung the ship,
Like greyhound starting from the slip
To seize his flying prey.
Awaked before the rushing prow,
The mimic fires of ocean glow,
Those lightnings of the wave;*
Wild sparkles crest the broken tides,
And, flashing round, the vessel's sides
With elvish lustre lave,
While, far behind, their livid light
To the dark billows of the night
A gloomy splendour gave.
It seems as if old Ocean shakes
From his dark brow the livid flakes
In envious pageantry,
To match the meteor light that streaks
Grim Hecla's midnight sky.

XXII.

Nor lacked they steadier light to keep
Their course upon the darkened deep;—
Artornish, on her frowning steep
'Twixt cloud and ocean hung,
Glanced with a thousand lights of glee,
And landward far, and far to sea,
Her festal radiance flung.
By that blithe beacon-light they steered,
Whose lustre mingled well
With the pale beam that now appeared,

* The phenomenon called by sailors Sea-fire, is one of the most beautiful and interesting which is witnessed in the Hebrides: at times the ocean appears entirely illuminated around the vessel, and a long train of lambent coruscations are perpetually bursting upon the sides of the vessel, or pursuing her wake through the darkness. These phosphoric appearances, concerning the origin of which naturalists are not agreed in opinion, seem to be called into action by the rapid motion of the ship through the water, and are probably owing to the water being saturated with fish-spawn, or other animal substances.

As the cold Moon her head upreared
Above the eastern Fell.

XXIII.

Thus guided, on their course they bore
Until they neared the mainland shore,
When frequent on the hollow blast
Wild shouts of merriment were cast,
And wind and wave and sea-birds' cry
With wassail sounds in concert vie,
Like funeral shrieks with revelry,
Or like the battle-shout
By peasants heard from cliffs on high,
When Triumph, Rage, and Agony,
Madden the fight and rout.
Now nearer yet, through mist and storm,
Dimly arose the Castle's form,
And deepened shadow made,
Far lengthened on the main below,
Where, dancing in reflected glow,
A hundred torches played,
Spangling the wave with lights as vain
As pleasures in this vale of pain,
That dazzle as they fade.

XXIV.

Beneath the Castle's sheltering lee,
They stayed their course in quiet sea.
Hewn in the rock, a passage there
Sought the dark fortress* by a stair
So strait, so high, so steep,
With peasant's staff one valiant hand
Might well the dizzy pass have manned,
'Gainst hundreds armed with spear and brand,
And plunged them in the deep.
His bugle then the helmsman wound;
Loud answered every echo round,
From turret, rock, and bay,
The postern's hinges crash and groan,
And soon the warder's cresset shone

* The fortress of a Hebridean chief was almost always on the sea-shore, for the facility of communication which the ocean afforded. Nothing can be more wild than the situations which they chose, and the devices by which the architects endeavoured to defend them. Narrow stairs and arched vaults were the usual mode of access, and the drawbridge appears at Dunstaffnage, and elsewhere, to have fallen from the gate of the building to the top of such a staircase; so that any one advancing with hostile purpose, found himself in a state of exposed and precarious elevation, with a gulph between him and the object of his attack. These fortresses were guarded with equal care. The duty of the watch devolved chiefly upon an officer called the Cockman, who had the charge of challenging all who approached the castle.

On those rude steps of slippery stone,
To light the upward way.
"Thrice welcome, holy Sire!" he said;
"Full long the spousal train have stayed,
And, vexed at thy delay,
Feared lest, amidst these wildering seas,
The darksome night and freshening breeze
Had driven thy bark astray."—

XXV.

"Warder," the younger stranger said,
"Thine erring guess some mirth had made
In mirthful hour; but nights like these,
When the rough winds wake western seas,
Brook not of glee. We crave some aid
And needful shelter for this maid
Until the break of day;
For, to ourselves, the deck's rude plank
Is easy as the mossy bank
That's breathed upon by May;
And for our storm-tossed skiff we seek
Short shelter in this leeward creek,
Prompt when the dawn the east shall streak,
Again to bear away."—
Answered the Warder, "In what name
Assert ye hospitable claim?
Whence come, or whither bound?
Hath Erin seen your parting sails?
Or come ye on Norweyan gales?
And seek ye England's fertile vales,
Or Scotland's mountain ground?"—

XXVI.

"Warriors—for other title none
For some brief space we list to own,
Bound by a vow—warriors are we;
In strife by land, and storm by sea,
We have been known to fame:
And these brief words have import dear
When sounded in a noble ear,
To harbour safe, and friendly cheer,
That gives us rightful claim.
Grant us the trivial boon we seek,
And we in other realms will speak
Fair of your courtesy;
Deny—and be your niggard Hold
Scorned by the noble and the bold,
Shunned by the pilgrim on the wold,
And wanderer on the lea!"—

XXVII.

"Bold stranger, no—'gainst claim like thine,
No bolt revolves by hand of mine,

Though urged in tone that more expressed
A monarch than a suppliant guest.
Be what ye will, Artornish Hall
On this glad eve is free to all.
Though he had drawn a hostile sword
'Gainst our great ally, England's Lord,
Or mail upon your shoulders borne,
To battle with the Lord of Lorn,
Or, outlawed, dwelt by greenwood tree
With the fierce Knight of Ellerslie,
Or aided even the murderous strife,
When Comyn fell beneath the knife
Of that fell homicide The Bruce,
This night had been a term of truce.—
Ho, vassals! give these guests your care,
And show the narrow postern stair."—

XXVIII.

To land these two bold brethren leapt,
(The weary crew their vessel kept)
And, lighted by the torches' flare,
That seaward flung their smoky glare,
The younger knight that maiden bare
Half lifeless up the rock;
On his strong shoulder leaned her head,
And down her long dark tresses shed,
As the wild vines in tendrils spread,
Droops from the mountain oak.
Him followed close that elder Lord,
And in his hand a sheathèd sword,
Such as few arms could wield;
But when he bound him to such task,
Well could it cleave the strongest casque,
And rend the surest shield.

XXIX.

The raised portcullis' arch they pass,
The wicket with its bars of brass,
The entrance long and low,
Flanked at each turn by loop-holes strait,
Where bowmen might in ambush wait,
(If force or fraud should burst the gate,)
To gall an entering foe.
But every jealous post of ward
Was now defenceless and unbarred,
And all the passage free
To one low-browed and vaulted room,
Where squire and yoeman, page and groom,
Plied their loud revelry.

XXX.

And "Rest ye here," the Warder bade,
"Till to our Lord your suit is said.—

And, comrades, gaze not on the maid,
And on these men who ask our aid,
As if ye ne'er had seen
A damsel tired of midnight bark,
Or wanderers of a moulding stark,
And bearing martial mien."—
But not for Eachin's reproof
Would page or vassal stand aloof,
But crowded on to stare,
As men of courtesy untaught,
Till fiery Edward roughly caught,
From one the foremost there,
His chequered plaid, and in its shroud,
To hide her from the vulgar crowd,
Involved his sister fair.
His brother, as the clansman bent
His sullen brow in discontent,
Made brief and stern excuse;—
"Vassal, were thine the cloak of pall
That decks thy Lord in bridal hall,
'Twere honoured by her use."—

XXXI.

Proud was his tone, but calm; his eye
Had that compelling dignity,
His mien that bearing haught and high,
Which common spirits fear;
Needed nor word nor signal more,
Nod, wink, and laughter, all were o'er;
Upon each other back they bore,
And gazed like startled deer.
But now appeared the Seneschal,
Commissioned by his lord to call
The strangers to the Baron's hall,
Where feasted fair and free
That Island Prince in nuptial tide,
With Edith there his lovely bride,
And her bold brother by her side,
And many a chief, the flower and pride
Of Western land and sea.

Here pause we, gentles, for a space;
And, if our tale hath won your grace
Grant us brief patience, and again
We will renew the minstrel strain.

CANTO SECOND.

I.

FILL the bright goblet, spread the festive board!
Summon the gay, the noble, and the fair!
Through the loud hall, in joyous concert poured,
Let mirth and music sound the dirge of Care!
But ask thou not if Happiness be there,
If the loud laugh disguise convulsive throe,
Or if the brow the heart's true livery wear;
Lift not the festal mask!—enough to know,
No scene of mortal life but teems with mortal woe.

II.

With beakers' clang, with harpers' lay,
With all that olden time deemed gay,
The Island Chieftain feasted high;
But there was in his troubled eye
A gloomy fire, and on his brow
Now sudden flushed, and faded now,
Emotions such as draw their birth
From deeper source than festal mirth.
By fits he paused, and harper's strain
And jester's tale went round in vain,
Or fell but on his idle ear
Like distant sounds which dreamers hear.
Then would he rouse him, and employ
Each art to aid the clamorous joy,
And call for pledge and lay,
And, for brief space, of all the crowd,
As he was loudest of the loud,
Seem gayest of the gay.

III.

Yet nought amiss the bridal throng
Marked in brief mirth, or musing long;
The vacant brow, the unlistening ear,
They gave to thoughts of raptures near,
And his fierce starts of sudden glee
Seemed bursts of bridegroom's ecstasy.
Nor thus alone misjudged the crowd,
Since lofty Lorn, suspicious, proud,
And jealous of his honoured line,
And that keen knight, De Argentine,*
(From England sent on errand high,
The Western league more firm to tie,)

*Sir Egidius, or Giles de Argentine, was one of the most accomplished knights of the period. He had served in the wars of Henry of Luxemburg with such high reputation, that he was, in popular estimation, the third worthy of the age.

Both deemed in Ronald's mood to find
A lover's transport-troubled mind,
But one sad heart, one tearful eye,
Pierced deeper through the mystery,
And watched, with agony and fear,
Her wayward bridegroom's varied cheer.

IV.

She watched—yet feared to meet his glance,
And he shunned hers;—till when by chance
They met, the point of foeman's lance
Had given a milder pang!
Beneath the intolerable smart
He writhed;—then sternly manned his heart
To play his hard but destined part,
And from the table sprang.
"Fill me the mighty cup!" he said,
"Erst owned by royal Somerled.*
Fill it, till on the studded brim
In burning gold the bubbles swim,
And every gem of varied shine
Glow doubly bright in rosy wine!
To you, brave lord, and brother mine,
Of Lorn, this pledge I drink—
The union of Our House with thine,
By this fair bridal-link!"—

V.

"Let it pass round!" quoth He of Lorn,
"And in good time—that winded horn
Must of the Abbot tell;

* A Hebridean drinking-cup, of the most ancient and curious workmanship, has been long preserved in the castle of Dunvegan, in Skye, the romantic seat of MacLeod of MacLeod, the chief of that ancient and powerful clan. The horn of Rorie More, preserved in the same family, and recorded by Dr. Johnson, is not to be compared with this piece of antiquity, which is one of the greatest curiosities in Scotland. It is nine inches and three-quarters in inside depth, and ten and a half in height on the outside, the extreme measure over the lips being four inches and a half. The cup is divided into two parts by a wrought ledge, beautifully ornamented, about three-fourths of an inch in breadth. Beneath this ledge the shape of the cup is rounded off, and terminates in a flat circle, like that of a teacup: four short feet support the whole. Above the projecting ledge the shape of the cup is nearly square, projecting outward at the brim. The cup is made of wood (oak to all appearance), but most curiously wrought and embossed with silver-work, which projects from the vessel. There are a number of regular projecting sockets, which appear to have been set with stones; two or three of them still hold pieces of coral, the rest are empty. At the four corners of the projecting ledge, or cornice, are four sockets, much larger, probably for pebbles or precious stones. The workmanship of the silver is extremely elegant, and appears to have been highly gilded. The ledge, brim, and legs of the cup are of silver. The family tradition bears that it was the property of Neil Ghlune-dhu, or Black-knee.

The laggard monk is come at last."—
Lord Ronald heard the bugle-blast,
And on the floor at random cast,
The untasted goblet fell.
But when the Warder in his ear
Tells other news, his blither cheer
Returns like sun of May,
When through a thunder-cloud it beams!—
Lord of two hundred isles, he seems
As glad of brief delay,
As some poor criminal might feel,
When from the gibbet or the wheel
Respited for a day.

VI.

"Brother of Lorn," with hurried voice
He said, "And you, fair lords, rejoice!
Here, to augment our glee,
Come wandering knights from travel far,
Well proved, they say, in strife of war,
And tempest on the sea.—
Ho! give them at your board such place
As best their presence seems to grace,
And bid them welcome free!"—
With solemn step, and silver wand,
The Seneschal the presence scanned
Of these strange guests; and well he knew
How to assign their rank its due;
For, though the costly furs
That erst had decked their caps were torn,
And their gay robes were over-worn,
And soiled their gilded spurs,
Yet such a high commanding grace
Was in their mien and in their face,
As suited best the princely dais,
And royal canopy;
And there he marshalled them their place,
First of that company.

VII.

Then lords and ladies spake aside,
And angry looks the error chide,
That gave to guests unnamed, unknown,
A place so near their prince's throne;
But Owen Erraught said,
"For forty years a seneschal,
To marshal guests in bower and hall
Has been my honoured trade.
Worship and birth to me are known,
By look, by bearing, and by tone,
Not by furred robe or broidered zone!
And 'gainst an oaken bough

I'll gage my silver wand of state,
That these three strangers oft have sate
In higher place than now."—

VIII.

"I, too," the aged Ferrand said,
"Am qualified by minstrel trade
Of rank and place to tell;—
Marked ye the younger stranger's eye,
My mates, how quick, how keen, how high,
How fierce its flashes fell,
Glancing among the festal rout
As if to seek the noblest out,
Because the owner might not brook
On any save his peers to look?
And yet it moves me more,
That steady, calm, majestic brow,
With which the elder chief even now
Scanned the gay presence o'er,
Like Being of superior kind,
In whose high-toned impartial mind
Degrees of mortal rank and state
Seem objects of indifferent weight.
The lady too—though closely tied
The mantle veil both face and eye,
Her motions' grace it could not hide,
Nor cloud her form's fair symmetry."—

IX.

Suspicious doubt and lordly scorn
Loured on the haughty front of Lorn.
From underneath his brows of pride,
The stranger guests he sternly eyed,
And whispered closely what the ear
Of Argentine alone might hear;
Then questioned, high and brief,
If, in their voyage, aught they knew
Of the rebellious Scottish crew,
Who to Rath-Erin's* shelter drew,
With Carrick's out-lawed Chief?

*It must be remembered by all who have read the Scottish history, that after he had slain Comyn at Dumfries, and asserted his right to the Scottish crown, Robert Bruce was reduced to the greatest extremity by the English and their adherents. He was crowned at Scone by the general consent of the Scottish barons, but his authority endured but a short time. According to the phrase said to have been used by his wife, he was for that year "a summer king, but not a winter one." On the 29th March, 1306, he was crowned king at Scone. Upon the 19th June in the same year, he was totally defeated at Methven, near Perth; and his most important adherents, with few exceptions, either executed, or compelled to embrace the English interest, for safety of their lives and fortunes. After this disaster, his life was that of an outlaw, rather than that of a candidate for monarchy. After many perilous adventures, and being driven to extremities, he

And if, their winter's exile o'er,
They harboured still by Ulster's shore,
Or launched their galleys on the main,
To vex their native land again?

X.

That younger stranger, fierce and high,
At once confronts the Chieftain's eye
With look of equal scorn:—
"Of rebels have we nought to show;
But if of Royal Bruce thou'dst know,
I warn thee he has sworn,
Ere thrice three days shall come and go,
His banner Scottish winds shall blow,
Despite each mean or mighty foe,
From England's every bill and bow,
To Allaster of Lorn."—
Kindled the mountain Chieftain's ire,
But Ronald quenched the rising fire;
"Brother, it better suits the time
To chase the night with Ferrand's rhyme,
Than wake, 'midst mirth and wine, the jars
That flow from these unhappy wars."—
"Content," said Lorn; and spoke apart
With Ferrand, master of his art,
Then whispered Argentine,—
"The lay I named will carry smart
To these bold strangers' haughty heart,
If right this guess of mine."—
He ceased, and it was silence all,
Until the Minstrel waked the hall.

XI.

THE BROOCH OF LORN.*

"Whence the brooch of burning gold,
That clasps the Chieftain's mantle fold,

took refuge, with a few trusty followers, at Rath-Erin, or Rachrine, the Recina of Ptolemy, a small island, lying almost opposite to the shores of Ballycastle, on the coast of Ireland.

*Robert Bruce, after his defeat at Methven, being hard pressed by the English, endeavoured, with the dispirited remnant of his followers, to escape from Breadalbane and the mountains of Perthshire into the Argyleshire Highlands. But he was encountered and repulsed, after a very severe engagement, by the Lord of Lorn. Bruce's personal strength and courage were never displayed to greater advantage than in this conflict. There is a tradition in the family of the MacDougals of Lorn, that their chieftain engaged in personal battle with Bruce himself, while the latter was employed in protecting the retreat of his men; that MacDougal was struck down by the king, whose strength of body was equal to his vigour of mind, and would have been slain on the spot, had not two of Lorn's vassals, a father and son, whom tradition terms M'Keoch, rescued him, by seizing the mantle of the monarch, and dragging him from above his adversary. Bruce rid himself of these foes by two blows of his redoubted battle-axe; but was so closely

Wrought and chased with rare device,
Studded fair with gems of price,*
On the varied tartans beaming,
As, through night's pale rainbow gleaming,
Fainter now, now seen afar,
Fitful shines the northern star?

"Gem! ne'er wrought on Highland mountain,
Did the fairy of the fountain,
Or the mermaid of the wave,
Frame thee in some coral cave?
Did in Iceland's darksome mine
Dwarf's swarth hands thy metal twine?
Or, mortal-moulded, comest thou here,
From England's love, or France's fear?

XII.

SONG CONTINUED.

"No!—thy splendours nothing tell
Foreign art or faëry spell.
Moulded thou for monarch's use,
By the over-weening Bruce,
When the royal robe he tied
O'er a heart of wrath and pride:
Thence in triumph wert thou torn,
By the victor hand of Lorn!

"While the gem was won and lost
Widely was the war-cry tossed!
Rung aloud Bendourish Fell,
Answered Douchart's sounding dell,
Fled the deer from wild Teyndrum,
When the homicide, o'ercome,
Hardly 'scaped with scath and scorn,
Left the pledge with conquering Lorn!

XIII.

SONG CONCLUDED.

"Vain was then the Douglas brand,
Vain the Campbell's vaunted hand,†

pressed by the other followers of Lorn, that he was forced to abandon the mantle, and brooch which fastened it, clasped in the dying grasp of the M'Keochs. A studded brooch, said to have been that which King Robert lost upon this occasion, was long preserved in the family of MacDougal, and was lost in a fire which consumed their temporary residence.

*Great art and expense was bestowed upon the *fibula*, or brooch, which secured the plaid, when the wearer was a person of importance.

†The gallant Sir James, called the Good Lord Douglas, the most faithful and valiant of Bruce's adherents, was wounded at the battle of Dalry. Sir Nigel, or Niel Campbell, was also in that unfortunate skirmish. He married Marjorie, sister to Robert Bruce, and was among his most faithful followers.

Vain Kirkpatrick's bloody dirk,
Making sure of murder's work;*
Barendown fled fast away,
Fled the fiery De la Haye,†
When this brooch, triumphant borne,
Beamed upon the breast of Lorn.

"Farthest fled its former Lord,
Left his men to brand and cord,
Bloody brand of Highland steel,
English gibbet, axe, and wheel.
Let him fly from coast to coast,
Dogged by Comyn's vengeful ghost,
While his spoils in triumph worn,
Long shall grace victorious Lorn!"—

XIV.

As glares the tiger on his foes,
Hemmed in by hunters, spears, and bows,
And, ere he bounds upon the ring,
Selects the object of his spring,—
Now on the bard, now on his Lord,
So Edward glared and grasped his sword—
But stern his brother spoke,—"Be still.
What! art thou yet so wild of will,
After high deeds and sufferings long,
To chafe thee for a menial's song?—

* Every reader must recollect that the proximate cause of Bruce's asserting his right to the crown of Scotland, was the death of John, called the Red Comyn. The causes of this act of violence, equally extraordinary from the high rank both of the perpetrator and sufferer, and from the place where the slaughter was committed, are variously related by the Scottish and English historians, and cannot now be ascertained. The fact that they met at the high altar of the Minorites or Grey-Friars' church in Dumfries, that their difference broke out into high and insulting language, and that Bruce drew his dagger and stabbed Comyn, is certain. Rushing to the door of the church, Bruce met two powerful barons, Kirkpatrick of Closeburn, and James de Lindsay, who eagerly asked him what tidings? "Bad tidings," answered Bruce, "I doubt I have slain Comyn." "Doubtest thou?" said Kirkpatrick, "I make sicker" (*i.e.* sure). With these words, he and Lindsay rushed into the church, and dispatched the wounded Comyn. The Kirkpatricks of Closeburn assumed, in memory of this deed, a hand holding a dagger, with the memorable words, "I make sicker."

† These knights are enumerated by Barbour, among the small number of Bruce's adherents, who remained in arms with him after the battle of Methven. There were more than one of the noble family of Hay engaged in Bruce's cause. But the principal was Gilbert de la Haye, Lord of Errol, a stanch adherent to King Robert's interest, whom he rewarded by creating him hereditary Lord High Constable of Scotland, a title which he used 16th March, 1308, where, in a letter from the peers of Scotland to Philip the Fair of France, he is designed *Gilbertus de Hay Constabularius Scotiæ*. He was slain at the battle of Halidoun-hill. Hugh de la Haye, his brother, was made prisoner at the battle of Methven.

Well hast thou framed, Old Man, thy strains,
To praise the hand that pays thy pains;*
Yet something might thy song have told
Of Lorn's three vassals true and bold,
Who rent their Lord from Bruce's hold,
As underneath his knee he lay,
And died to save him in the fray.
I've heard the Bruce's cloak and clasp
Was clenched within their dying grasp,
What time a hundred foemen more
Rushed in and back the victor bore,
Long after Lorn had left the strife,
Full glad to 'scape with limb and life.—
Enough of this—And, Minstrel, hold,
As minstrel-hire, this chain of gold,
For future lays a fair excuse,
To speak more nobly of the Bruce."—

XV.

"Now, by Columba's shrine, I swear,
And every saint that's buried there,
'Tis he himself!" Lorn sternly cries,
"And for my kinsman's death he dies."—
As loudly Ronald calls—"Forbear!
Not in my sight while brand I wear,
O'ermatched by odds, shall warrior fall,
Or blood of stranger stain my hall!
This ancient fortress of my race
Shall be misfortune's resting-place,
Shelter and shield of the distressed,
No slaughter-house for shipwrecked guest."—
"Talk not to me," fierce Lorn replied,
"Of odds or match!—when Comyn died,
Three daggers clashed within his side!
Talk not to me of sheltering hall,
The Church of GOD saw Comyn fall!
On God's own altar streamed his blood,
While o'er my prostrate kinsman stood
The ruthless murderer—e'en as now—
With armèd hand and scornful brow.—
Up, all who love me! blow on blow!
And lay the outlawed felons low!"—

XVI.

Then up sprung many a mainland Lord,
Obedient to their Chieftain's word.

* The character of the Highland bards, however high in an earlier period of society, seems soon to have degenerated. The Irish affirm, that in their kindred tribes severe laws became necessary to restrain their avarice. In the Highlands they seem gradually to have sunk into contempt, as well as the orators, or men of speech, with whose office that of family poet was often united.

Barcaldine's arm is high in air,
And Kinloch-Alline's blade is bare,
Black Murthok's dirk has left its sheath,
And clenched is Dermid's hand of death.
Their muttered threats of vengeance swell
Into a wild and warlike yell;
Onward they press with weapons high,
The affrighted females shrick and fly,
And, Scotland, then thy brightest ray
Had darkened ere its noon of day,
But every chief of birth and fame,
That from the Isles of Ocean came,
At Ronald's side that hour withstood
Fierce Lorn's relentless thirst for blood.

XVII.

Brave Torquil from Dunvegan high,
Lord of the misty hills of Skye,
Mac-Niel, wild Bara's ancient thane,
Duart, of bold Clan Gillian's strain,
Fergus, of Canna's castled bay,
Mac-Duffith, Lord of Colonsay,
Soon as they saw the broadswords glance,
With ready weapons rose at once,
More prompt, that many an ancient feud,
Full oft suppressed, full oft renewed,
Glowed 'twixt the chieftains of Argyle,
And many a lord of ocean's isle.
Wild was the scene—each sword was bare,
Back streamed each chieftain's shaggy hair,
In gloomy opposition set,
Eyes, hands, and brandished weapons met;
Blue gleaming o'er the social board,
Flashed to the torches many a sword;
And soon those bridal lights may shine
On purple blood for rosy wine.

XVIII.

While thus for blows and death prepared,
Each heart was up, each weapon bared,
Each foot advanced,—a surly pause
Still reverenced hospitable laws.
All menaced violence, but alike
Reluctant each the first to strike,
(For aye accursed in minstrel line
Is he who brawls 'mid song and wine,
And, matched in numbers and in might,
Doubtful and desperate seemed the fight.)
Thus threat and murmur died away,
Till on the crowded hall there lay
Such silence, as the deadly still,
Ere bursts the thunder on the hill.

With blade advanced, each Chieftain bold
Showed like the Sworder's form of old,
As wanting still the torch of life,
To wake the marble into strife.

XIX.

That awful pause the stranger maid,
And Edith, seized to pray for aid.
As to De Argentine they clung,
Away her veil the stranger flung,
And, lovely 'mid her wild despair,
Fast streamed her eyes, wide flowed her hair.
"O thou, of knighthood once the flower,
Sure refuge in distressful hour,
Thou, who in Judah well hast fought
For our dear faith, and oft hast sought
Renown in knightly exercise,
When this poor hand has dealt the prize,
Say, can thy soul of honour brook
On the unequal strife to look,
When butchered thus in peaceful hall,
Those once thy friends, my brethren, fall!"—
To Argentine she turned her word,
But her eye sought the Island Lord.
A flush like evening's setting flame
Glowed on his cheek; his hardy frame,
As with a brief convulsion shook:
With hurried voice and eager look,—
"Fear not," he said, "my Isabel!
What said I—Edith!—all is well—
Nay, fear not—I will well provide
The safety of my lovely bride—
My bride?"—but there the accents clung
In tremor to his faltering tongue.

XX.

Now rose De Argentine, to claim
The prisoners in his sovereign's name,
To England's crown, who, vassals sworn,
'Gainst their liege lord had weapon borne—
(Such speech, I ween, was but to hide
His care their safety to provide;
For knight more true in thought and deed
Than Argentine ne'er spurred a steed)—
And Ronald, who his meaning guessed,
Seemed half to sanction the request.
This purpose fiery Torquil broke;—
"Somewhat we've heard of England's yoke,"
He said, "and, in our islands, Fame
Hath whispered of a lawful claim,
That calls the Bruce fair Scotland's Lord,
Though dispossessed by foreign sword.

This craves reflection—but though right
And just the charge of England's Knight,
Let England's crown her rebels seize,
Where she has power;—in towers like these,
'Midst Scottish Chieftains summoned here
To bridal mirth and bridal cheer,
Be sure, with no consent of mine,
Shall either Lorn or Argentine
With chains or violence, in our sight,
Oppress a brave and banished knight."—

XXI.

Then waked the wild debate again,
With brawling threat and clamour vain.
Vassals and menials, thronging in,
Lent their brute rage to swell the din;
When, far and wide, a bugle-clang
From the dark ocean upward rang.
"The Abbot comes!" they cry at once,
"The holy man, whose favoured glance
Hath sainted visions known;
Angels have met him on the way,
Beside the blessed martyrs' bay,
And by Columba's stone.
His monks have heard their hymnings high
Sound from the summit of Dun-Y,
To cheer his penance lone,
When at each cross, on girth and wold,
(Their number thrice a hundred-fold,)
His prayer he made, his beads he told,
With Aves many a one—
He comes our feuds to reconcile,
A sainted man from sainted isle;
We will his holy doom abide,
The Abbot shall our strife decide."—

XXII.

Scarcely this fair accord was o'er,
When through the wide-revolving door
The black-stoled brethren wind;
Twelve sandalled monks, who reliques bore
With many a torch-bearer before,
And many a cross behind.
Then sunk each fierce up-lifted hand,
And dagger bright and flashing brand
Dropped swiftly at the sight;
They vanished from the churchman's eye,
As shooting stars, that glance and die,
Dart from the vault of night.

XXIII.

The Abbot on the threshold stood,
And in his hand the holy rood;

Back on his shoulders flowed his hood,
The torches' glaring ray
Showed, in its red and flashing light,
His withered cheek and amice white,
His blue eye glistening cold and bright,
His tresses scant and grey.
"Fair Lords," he said, "Our Lady's love,
And peace be with you from above,
And Benedicite!—
—But what means this? no peace is here!—
Do dirks unsheathed suit bridal cheer?
Or are these naked brands
A seemly show for Churchman's sight,
When he comes summoned to unite
Betrothèd hearts and hands?"—

XXIV.

Then, cloaking hate with fiery zeal,
Proud Lorn first answered the appeal;—
"Thou comest, O holy Man,
True sons of blessèd church to greet,
But little deeming here to meet
A wretch, beneath the ban
Of Pope and Church, for murder done
Even on the sacred altar-stone!—
Well mayst thou wonder we should know
Such miscreant here, nor lay him low,
Or dream of greeting, peace, or truce,
With excommunicated Bruce!
Yet well I grant, to end debate,
Thy sainted voice decide his fate."—

XXV.

Then Ronald pled the stranger's cause,
And knighthood's oath and honour's laws;
And Isabel, on bended knee,
Brought prayers and tears to back the plea;
And Edith lent her generous aid,
And wept, and Lorn for mercy prayed.
"Hence," he exclaimed, "degenerate maid!
Was't not enough to Ronald's bower
I brought thee, like a paramour,*

*It was anciently customary in the Highlands to bring the bride to the house of the husband. Nay, in some cases the complaisance was stretched so far, that she remained there upon trial for a twelvemonth, and the bridegroom, even after this period of cohabitation, retained an option of refusing to fulfil his engagement. It is said that a desperate feud ensued between the clans of MacDonald of Sleate and MacLeod, owing to the former chief having availed himself of this licence to send back to Dunvegan a sister or daughter of the latter. MacLeod, resenting the indignity, observed, that since there was no wedding bonfire, there should be one to solemnize the divorce. Accordingly he burned and laid waste the territories of

Or bond-maid at her master's gate,
His careless cold approach to wait?—
But the bold Lord of Cumberland,
The gallant Clifford, seeks thy hand.
His it shall be—Nay, no reply!
Hence! till those rebel eyes be dry."—
With grief the Abbot heard and saw,
Yet nought relaxed his brow of awe.

XXVI.

Then Argentine, in England's name,
So highly urged his sovereign's claim,
He waked a spark, that, long suppressed,
Had smouldered in Lord Ronald's breast;
And now, as from the flint the fire,
Flashed forth at once his generous ire.—
"Enough of noble blood," he said,
"By English Edward had been shed,
Since matchless Wallace first had been
In mockery crowned with wreaths of green,
And done to death by felon hand
For guarding well his father's land.
Where's Nigel Bruce? and De la Haye,
And valiant Seton—where are they?
Where Somerville, the kind and free?
And Fraser, flower of chivalry?*
Have they not been on gibbet bound,
Their quarters flung to hawk and hound,
And hold we here a cold debate,
To yield more victims to their fate?
What! can the English Leopard's mood
Never be gorged with northern blood?
Was not the life of Athole† shed,
To soothe the tyrant's sickened bed?

MacDonald, who retaliated, and a deadly feud, with all its accompaniments, took place in form.

* When these lines were written, the author was remote from the means of correcting his indistinct recollection concerning the individual fate of Bruce's followers, after the battle of Methven. Hugh de la Haye and Thomas Somerville of Lintoun and Cowdally, ancestor of Lord Somerville, were both made prisoners at that defeat, but neither was executed.

Sir Nigel Bruce was the younger brother of Robert, to whom he committed the charge of his wife and daughter, Marjorie, and the defence of his strong castle of Kildrummie, near the head of the Don, in Aberdeenshire. Kildrummie long resisted the arms of the earls of Lancaster and Hereford, until the magazine was treacherously burnt. The garrison was then compelled to surrender at discretion, and Nigel Bruce, a youth remarkable for personal beauty, as well as for gallantry, fell into the hands of the unrelenting Edward. He was tried by a special commission at Berwick, was condemned and executed. Christopher Seatoun shared the same unfortunate fate.

† John de Strathbogie, earl of Athole, had attempted to escape out of the kingdom, but a storm cast him upon the coast, when he was

And must his word, at dying day,
Be nought but quarter, hang, and slay!*—
Thou frown'st, De Argentine,—My gage
Is prompt to prove the strife I wage."—

XXVII.

"Nor deem," said stout Dunvegan's knight,
"That thou shalt brave alone the fight!
By saints of isle and mainland both,
By Woden wild, (my grandsire's oath,)
Let Rome and England do their worst,
Howe'er attainted or accursed,
If Bruce shall e'er find friends again,
Once more to brave a battle-plain,
If Douglas couch again his lance,
Or Randolph dare another chance,
Old Torquil will not be to lack
With twice a thousand at his back.—
Nay, chafe not at my bearing bold,
Good Abbot! for thou know'st of old,
Torquil's rude thought and stubborn will
Smack of the wild Norwegian still;
Nor will I barter Freedom's cause
For England's wealth, or Rome's applause."—

XXVIII.

The Abbot seemed with eye severe,
The hardy Chieftan's speech to hear;
Then on the monarch turned the Monk,
But twice his courage came and sunk,
Confronted with the hero's look;
Twice fell his eye, his accents shook;
At length, resolved in tone and brow,
Sternly he questioned him—"And thou,
Unhappy! what hast thou to plead,
Why I denounce not on thy deed
That awful doom which canons tell
Shuts paradise, and opens hell;
Anathema of power so dread,
It blends the living with the dead,
Bids each good angel soar away,
And every ill one claim his prey;

taken, sent to London, and executed, with circumstances of great barbarity, being first half-strangled, then let down from the gallows while yet alive, barbarously dismembered, and his body burnt.

*This alludes to a passage in Barbour, singularly expressive of the vindictive spirit of Edward I. The prisoners taken at the castle of Kildrummie had surrendered upon condition that they should be at King Edward's disposal. "But his will," says Barbour, "was always evil towards Scottishmen."

†The MacLeods, and most other distinguished Hebridean families, were of Scandinavian extraction, and some were late or imperfect converts to Christianity. The family names of Torquil, Thormod, &c., are all Norwegian.

Expels thee from the church's care,
And deafens Heaven against thy prayer;
Arms every hand against thy life,
Bans all who aid thee in the strife,
Nay, each whose succour, cold and scant,
With meanest alms relieves thy want;
Haunts thee while living,—and, when dead,
Dwells on thy yet devoted head,
Rends Honour's scutcheon from thy hearse,
Stills o'er thy bier the holy verse,
And spurns thy corpse from hallowed ground,
Flung like wild carrion to the hound!
Such is the dire and desperate doom,
For sacrilege decreed by Rome;
And such the well-deservèd meed
Of thine unhallowed, ruthless deed."—

XXIX.

"Abbot!" The Bruce replied, "thy charge
It boots not to dispute at large.
This much, howe'er, I bid thee know,
No selfish vengeance dealt the blow,
For Comyn died his country's foe.
Nor blame I friends whose ill-timed speed
Fulfilled my soon-repented deed,
Nor censure those from whose stern tongue
The dire anathema has rung.
I only blame mine own wild ire,
By Scotland's wrongs incensed to fire
Heaven knows my purpose to atone,
Far as I may, the evil done,
And hears a penitent's appeal
From papal curse and prelate's zeal.
My first and dearest task achieved
Fair Scotland from her thrall relieved
Shall many a priest in cope and stole
Say requiem for Red Comyn's soul,
While I the blessèd cross advance,
And expiate this unhappy chance,
In Palestine,* with sword and lance.
But, while content the church should know
My conscience owns the debt I owe,
Unto De Argentine and Lorn
The name of traitor I return,
Bid them defiance stern and high,
And give them in their throats the lie!
These brief words spoke, I speak no more,
Do what thou wilt; my shrift is o'er."—

* Bruce uniformly professed, and probably felt, compunction for having violated the sanctuary of the church, by the slaughter of Comyn; and finally, in his last hours, in testimony of his faith, penitence, and zeal, he requested James Lord Douglas to carry his heart to Jerusalem, to be there deposited in the Holy Sepulchre.

XXX.

Like man by prodigy amazed,
Upon the King the Abbot gazed;
Then o'er his pallid features glance
Convulsions of ecstatic trance.
His breathing came more thick and fast,
And from his pale blue eyes were cast
Strange rays of wild and wandering light;
Uprise his locks of silver white,
Flushed is his brow, through every vein
In azure tide the currents strain,
And undistinguished accents broke
The awful silence ere he spoke:—

XXXI.

"De Bruce! I rose with purpose dread
To speak my curse* upon thy head,
And give thee as an outcast o'er
To him who burns to shed thy gore;—
But, like the Midianite of old,
Who stood on Zophim,† heaven-controlled,
I feel within mine aged breast
A power that will not be repressed.
It prompts my voice, it swells my veins,
It burns, it maddens, it constrains!—
De Bruce, thy sacrilegious blow
Hath at God's altar slain thy foe:
O'er-mastered yet by high behest,
I bless thee, and thou shalt be blessed!"—
He spoke, and o'er the astonished throng
Was silence, awful, deep, and long.

XXXII.

Again that light has fired his eye,
Again his form swells bold and high,
The broken voice of age is gone,
'Tis vigorous manhood's lofty tone:—
"Thrice vanquished on the battle-plain,
Thy followers slaughtered, fled, or ta'en,

* So soon as the notice of Comyn's slaughter reached Rome, Bruce and his adherents were excommunicated. It was published first by the archbishop of York, and renewed at different times, particularly by Lambyrton, bishop of St. Andrew's, in 1308; but it does not appear to have answered the purpose which the English monarch expected. Indeed, for reasons which it may be difficult to trace, the thunders of Rome descended upon the Scottish mountains with less effect than in more fertile countries. Probably the comparative poverty of the benefices occasioned that fewer foreign clergy settled in Scotland, and the interest of the native churchmen were linked with that of their country. Many of the Scottish prelates, Lambyrton the primate particularly, declared for Bruce, while he was yet under the ban of the church, although he afterwards again changed sides.

† Numbers, chaps. xxiii. and xxiv.

A hunted wanderer on the wild,*
On foreign shores a man exiled,
Disowned, deserted, and distressed,
I bless thee, and thou shalt be blessed;
Blessed in the hall and in the field,
Under the mantle as the shield.
Avenger of thy country's shame,
Restorer of her injured fame,
Blessed in thy sceptre and thy sword,
De Bruce, fair Scotland's rightful Lord,
Blessed in thy deeds and in thy fame,
What lengthened honours wait thy name!
In distant ages, sire to son
Shall tell thy tale of freedom won,
And teach his infants, in the use
Of earliest speech, to falter Bruce.
Go, then, triumphant! sweep along
Thy course, the theme of many a song!
The Power, whose dictates swell my breast,
Hath blessed thee, and thou shalt be blessed!—
Enough—my short-lived strength decays,
And sinks the momentary blaze.—
Heaven hath our destined purpose broke,
Not here must nuptial vow be spoke;
Brethren, our errand here is o'er,
Our task discharged.—Unmoor, unmoor!"—
His priests received the exhausted Monk,
As breathless in their arms he sunk.
Punctual his orders to obey,
The train refused all longer stay,
Embarked, raised sail, and bore away.

CANTO THIRD.

I.

HAST thou not marked, when o'er thy startled head
Sudden and deep the thunder-peal has rolled,
How, when its echoes fell, a silence dead
Sunk on the wood, the meadow, and the wold?
The rye-grass shakes not on the sod-built fold,
The rustling aspen's leaves are mute and still,
The wall-flower waves not on the ruined Hold,
Till, murmuring distant first, then near and shrill,
The savage whirlwind wakes, and sweeps the groaning hill.

* This is not metaphorical. The echoes of Scotland did actually

——— ——— ring
With the bloodhounds that bayed for her fugitive king.

A very curious and romantic tale is told by Barbour upon this subject.

II.

Artornish! such a silence sunk
Upon thy halls, when that grey Monk
His prophet-speech had spoke;
And his obedient brethren's sail
Was stretched to meet the southern gale
Before a whisper woke.
Then murmuring sounds of doubt and fear,
Close poured in many an anxious ear,
The solemn stillness broke;
And still they gazed with eager guess,
Where, in an oriel's deep recess,
The Island Prince seemed bent to press
What Lorn, by his impatient cheer,
And gesture fierce, scarce deigned to hear.

III.

Starting at length with frowning look,
His hand he clenched, his head he shook,
And sternly flung apart;—
"And deem'st thou me so mean of mood,
As to forget the mortal feud,
And clasp the hand with blood embrued
From my dear Kinsman's heart?
Is this thy rede?*—a due return
For ancient league and friendship sworn!
But well our mountain proverb shows
The faith of Islesmen ebbs and flows.
Be it even so—believe, ere long,
He that now bears shall wreak the wrong.—
Call Edith—call the Maid of Lorn!
My sister, slaves!—for further scorn,
Be sure nor she nor I will stay.—
Away, De Argentine, away!
We nor ally nor brother know,
In Bruce's friend, or England's foe."—

IV.

But who the Chieftain's rage can tell,
When, sought from lowest dungeon cell
To highest tower the castle round,
No Lady Edith was there found!
He shouted, "Falsehood!—treachery!—
Revenge and blood!—a lordly meed
To him that will avenge the deed!
A Baron's lands!"—His frantic mood
Was scarcely by the news withstood,
That Morag shared his sister's flight,
And that, in hurry of the night,
'Scaped noteless, and without remark,
Two strangers sought the Abbot's bark.—

* Advice.

"Man every galley!—fly—pursue!
The priest his treachery shall rue!
Ay, and the time shall quickly come,
When we shall hear the thanks that Rome
Will pay his feignèd prophecy!"—
Such was fierce Lorn's indignant cry;
And Cormac Doil in haste obeyed,
Hoisted his sail, his anchor weighed,
(For, glad of each pretext for spoil,
A pirate* sworn was Cormac Doil.)
But others, lingering, spoke apart,—
"The Maid has given her maiden heart
To Ronald of the Isles,
And, fearful lest her brother's word
Bestow her on that English Lord,
She seeks Iona's piles,
And wisely deems it best to dwell
A votaress in the holy cell,
Until these feuds, so fierce and fell,
The Abbot reconciles."—

V.

As, impotent of ire, the hall
Echoed to Lorn's impatient call,
"My horse, my mantle, and my train!
Let none who honours Lorn remain!"—
Courteous, but stern a bold request
To Bruce De Argentine addressed.
"Lord Earl," he said,—"I cannot chuse
But yield such title to the Bruce,
Though name and earldom both are gone,
Since he braced rebel's armour on—
But, Earl or Serf—rude phrase was thine
Of late, and launched at Argentine;
Such as compels me to demand
Redress of honour at thy hand.
We need not to each other tell,
That both can wield their weapons well;
Then do me but the soldier grace,
This glove upon thy helm to place
Where we may meet in fight;
And I will say, as still I've said,
Though by ambition far misled,
Thou art a noble knight."—

VI.

"And I," the princely Bruce replied,
"Might term it stain on knighthood's pride,
That the bright sword of Argentine
Should in a tyrant's quarrel shine;—

* Pirates were very common in these isles at the period in which the action of the poem is laid.

But, for your brave request,
Be sure the honoured pledge you gave
In every battle-field shall wave
Upon my helmet-crest;
Believe, that if my hasty tongue
Hath done thine honour causeless wrong,
It shall be well redressed.
Not dearer to my soul was glove,
Bestowed in youth by lady's love,
Than this which thou hast given!
Thus, then, my noble foe I greet;
Health and high fortune till we meet,
And then—what pleases Heaven."

VII.

Thus parted they—for now, with sound
Like waves rolled back from rocky ground,
The friends of Lorn retire;
Each mainland chieftain, with his train,
Draws to his mountain towers again,
Pondering how mortal schemes prove vain,
And mortal hopes expire.
But through the castle double guard,
By Ronald's charge, kept wakeful ward,
Wicket and gate were trebly barred,
By beam and bolt and chain;
Then of the guests, in courteous sort,
He prayed excuse for mirth broke short,
And bade them in Artornish fort
In confidence remain.
Now torch and menial tendance led
Chieftain and knight to bower and bed,
And beads were told, and aves said,
And soon they sunk away
Into such sleep, as wont to shed
Oblivion on the weary head,
After a toilsome day.

VIII.

But soon up-roused, the Monarch cried
To Edward slumbering by his side,
"Awake, or sleep for aye!
Even now there jarred a secret door—
A taper-light gleams on the floor—
Up, Edward, up, I say!
Some one glides in like midnight ghost—
—Nay, strike not! 'tis our noble Host."—
Advancing then his taper's flame,
Ronald stept forth, and with him came
Dunvegan's chief—each bent the knee
To Bruce, in sign of fealty,
And proffered him his sword.

And hailed him, in a monarch's style,
As king of mainland and of isle,
And Scotland's rightful lord.
"And O," said Ronald, "Owned of Heaven!
Say, is my erring youth forgiven,
By falsehood's arts from duty driven,
Who rebel falchion drew,
Yet ever to thy deeds of fame,
Even while I strove against thy claim,
Paid homage just and true?"—
"Alas! dear youth, the unhappy time,"
Answered the Bruce, "must bear the crime,
Since, guiltier far than you,
Even I"—he paused; for Falkirk's woes
Upon his conscious soul arose.*
The Chieftain to his breast he pressed,
And in a sigh concealed the rest.

IX.

They proffered aid, by arms and might,
To repossess him in his right;
But well their counsels must be weighed,
Ere banners raised and musters made,
For English hire and Lorn's intrigues
Bound many chiefs in southern leagues.
In answer, Bruce his purpose bold
To his new vassals frankly told
"The winter worn in exile o'er,
I longed for Carrick's kindred shore.
I thought upon my native Ayr,
And longed to see the burly fare
That Clifford makes, whose lordly call
Now echoes through my father's hall.
But first my course to Arran led,
Where valiant Lennox gathers head,
And on the sea, by tempest tossed,
Our barks dispersed, our purpose crossed,
Mine own, a hostile sail to shun,
Far from her destined course had run,
When that wise will, which masters ours,
Compelled us to your friendly towers."—

X.

Then Torquil spoke: "The time craves speed!
We must not linger in our deed,
But instant pray our Sovereign Liege
To shun the perils of a siege.

*I have followed the vulgar and inaccurate tradition, that Bruce fought against Wallace, and the array of Scotland, at the fatal battle of Falkirk. There is full evidence that Bruce was not at that time on the English side, nor present at the battle of Falkirk; nay, that he acted as a guardian of Scotland, along with John Comyn, in the name of Baliol, and in opposition to the English.

The vengeful Lorn, with all his powers,
Lies but too near Artornish towers,
And England's light-armed vessels ride,
Not distant far, the waves of Clyde,
Prompt at these tidings to unmoor,
And sweep each strait, and guard each shore.
Then, till this fresh alarm pass by,
Secret and safe my Liege must lie
In the fair bounds of friendly Skye,
Torquil thy pilot and thy guide."—
"Not so, brave Chieftain," Ronald cried;
"Myself will on my Sovereign wait,
And raise in arms the men of Sleate,
Whilst thou, renowned where chiefs debate,
Shalt sway their souls by counsel sage,
And awe them by thy locks of age."—
"And if my words in weight shall fail,
This ponderous sword shall turn the scale."—

XI.

"The scheme," said Bruce, "contents me well;
Meantime, 'twere best that Isabel,
For safety, with my bark and crew,
Again to friendly Erin drew.
There, Edward, too, shall with her wend,
In need to cheer her and defend,
And muster up each scattered friend."—
Here seemed it as Lord Ronald's ear
Would other counsel gladlier hear;
But, all achieved as soon as planned,
Both barks in secret armed and manned,
From out the haven bore;
On different voyage forth they ply,
This for the coast of winged Skye,
And that for Erin's shore.

XII.

With Bruce and Ronald bides the tale.
To favouring winds they gave the sail,
Till Mull's dark headlands scarce they knew,
And Ardnamurchan's hills were blue.
But then the squalls blew close and hard,
And, fain to strike the galley's yard,
And take them to the oar,
With these rude seas, in weary plight,
They strove the livelong day and night,
Nor till the dawning had a sight
Of Skye's romantic shore.
Where Coolin stoops him to the west,
They saw upon his shivered crest
The sun's arising gleam;
But such the labour and delay,
Ere they were moored in Scarigh bay,

(For calmer heaven compelled to stay)
He shot a western beam.
Then Ronald said,—"If true mine eye,
These are the savage wilds that lie
North of Strathnardill and Dunskye;*
No human foot comes here,
And, since these adverse breezes blow,
If my good Liege love hunter's bow,
What hinders that on land we go,
And strike a mountain deer?
Allan, my Page, shall with us wend;
A bow full deftly can he bend,
And, if we meet a herd, may send
A shaft shall mend our cheer."—
Then each took bow and bolts in hand,
Their row-boat launched and leapt to land,
And left their skiff and train,
Where a wild stream, with headlong shock,
Came brawling down its bed of rock,
To mingle with the main.

XIII.

A while their route they silent made,
As men who stalk for mountain deer,
Till the good Bruce to Ronald said,
"St. Mary! what a scene is here!
I've traversed many a mountain-strand,
Abroad and in my native land,
And it has been my lot to tread
Where safety more than pleasure led;
Thus, many a waste I've wandered o'er,
Clombe many a crag, crossed many a moor;
But, by my halidome,
A scene so rude, so wild as this,
Yet so sublime in barrenness,
Ne'er did my wandering footsteps press,
Where'er I happed to roam."—

XIV.

No marvel thus the Monarch spake;
For rarely human eye has known
A scene so stern as that dread lake,
With its dark ledge of barren stone.
Seems that primeval earthquake's sway
Hath rent a strange and shattered way
Through the rude bosom of the hill,

* The extraordinary piece of scenery which I have here attempted to describe, is, I think, unparalleled in any part of Scotland, at least in any which I have visited. It lies just upon the frontier of the Laird of MacLeod's country, which is thereabouts divided from the estate of Mr. Mac-Allister of Strath-aird, called Strathnardill by the Dean of the Isles.

And that each naked precipice,
Sable ravine and dark abyss,
Tells of the outrage still.
The wildest glen, but this, can show
Some touch of Nature's genial glow:
On high Benmore green mosses grow,
And heath-bells bud in deep Glencoe,
And copse on Cruchan-Ben,
But here, above, around, below,
On mountain or in glen,
Nor tree, nor shrub, nor plant, nor flower,
Nor aught of vegetative power,
The weary eye may ken.
For all is rocks at random thrown,
Black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone,
As if were here denied
The summer sun, the spring's sweet dew,
That clothe with many a varied hue
The bleakest mountain-side.

XV.

And wilder, forward as they wound,
Were the proud cliffs and lake profound.
Huge terraces of granite black
Afforded rude and cumbered track;
For from the mountain hoar,
Hurled headlong in some night of fear,
When yelled the wolf and fled the deer,
Loose crags had toppled o'er;
And some, chance-poised and balanced, lay,
So that a stripling arm might sway
A mass no host could raise,
In Nature's rage at random thrown,
Yet trembling like the Druid's stone
On its precarious base.
The evening mists, with ceaseless change,
Now clothed the mountains' lofty range,
Now left their foreheads bare,
And round the skirts their mantle furled,
Or on the sable waters curled,
Or, on the eddying breezes whirled,
Dispersed in middle air.
And oft, condensed, at once they lower,
When, brief and fierce, the mountain shower
Pours like a torrent down,
And when return the sun's glad beams,
Whitened with foam a thousand streams
Leap from the mountain's crown.

XVI.

"This lake," said Bruce, "whose barriers drear
Are precipices sharp and sheer,
Yielding no track for goat or deer,
Save the black shelves we tread,

How term you its dark waves? and how
Yon northern mountain's pathless brow,
And yonder peak of dread,
That to the evening sun uplifts
The grisely gulphs and slaty rifts,
Which seam its shivered head?"
"Coriskin call the dark lake's name,
Coolin the ridge, as bards proclaim,
From old Cuchullin, chief of fame.
But bards, familiar in our isles
Rather with Nature's frowns than smiles,
Full oft their careless humours please
By sportive names for scenes like these.
I would old Torquil were to show
His Maidens with their breasts of snow,
Or that my noble Liege were nigh
To hear his Nurse sing lullaby!
(The Maids—tall cliffs with breakers white,
The Nurse—a torrent's roaring might,)
Or that your eye could see the mood
Of Corrievreken's whirlpool rude,
When dons the Hag her whitened hood—
'Tis thus our islesmen's fancy frames,
For scenes so stern, fantastic names."—

XVII.

Answered the Bruce, "And musing mind
Might here a graver moral find.
These mighty cliffs, that heave on high
Their naked brows to middle sky,
Indifferent to the sun or snow,
Where nought can fade, and nought can blow,
May they not mark a Monarch's fate,—
Raised high 'mid storms of strife and state,
Beyond life's lowlier pleasures placed,
His soul a rock, his heart a waste?
O'er hope and love and fear aloft
High rears his crowned head—But soft!
Look, underneath yon jutting crag
Are hunters and a slaughtered stag.
Who may they be? But late you said
No steps these desert regions tread?"—

XVIII.

"So said I—and believed in sooth,"
Ronald replied, "I spoke the truth.
Yet now I spy, by yonder stone,
Five men—they mark us, and come on;
And by their badge on bonnet borne,
I guess them of the land of Lorn,
Foes to my Liege."—"So let it be;
I've faced worse odds than five to three—
—But the poor Page can little aid;
Then be our battle thus arrayed,

If our free passage they contest;
Cope thou with two, I'll match the rest."—
"Not so, my Liege—for by my life,
This sword shall meet the treble strife;
My strength, my skill in arms, more small,
And less the loss should Ronald fall.
But islesmen soon to soldiers grow,—
Allan has sword as well as bow,
And were my Monarch's order given,
Two shafts should make our number even."—
"No! not to save my life!" he said;
"Enough of blood rests on my head,
Too rashly spilled—we soon shall know,
Whether they come as friend or foe."—

XIX.

Nigh came the strangers, and more nigh;—
Still less they pleased the Monarch's eye.
Men were they all of evil mien,
Down-looked, unwilling to be seen;*
They moved with half-resolvèd pace,
And bent on earth each gloomy face.
The foremost two were fair arrayed,
With brogue and bonnet, trews and plaid,
And bore the arms of mountaineers,
Daggers and broadswords, bows and spears.
The three, that lagged small space behind,
Seemed serfs of more degraded kind;
Goat-skins or deer-hides o'er them cast,
Made a rude fence against the blast;
Their arms and feet and heads were bare,
Matted their beards, unshorn their hair;
For arms, the caitiffs bore in hand
A club, an axe, a rusty brand.

XX.

Onward, still mute, they kept the track;—
"Tell who ye be, or else stand back,"
Said Bruce; "In deserts when they meet,
Men pass not as in peaceful street."—
Still, at his stern command, they stood,
And proffered greeting brief and rude
But acted courtesy so ill,
As seemed of fear, and not of will.
"Wanderers we are, as you may be;
Men hither driven by wind and sea,
Who, if you list to taste our cheer,
Will share with you this fallow deer."—
"If from the sea, where lies your bark?"—
"Ten fathom deep in ocean dark!

*The story of Bruce's meeting the banditti is copied, with such alterations as the fictitious narrative rendered necessary, from a striking incident in the monarch's history, told by Barbour.

Wrecked yesternight; but we are men
Who little sense of peril ken.
The shades come down—the day is shut—
Will you go with us to our hut?"—
"Our vessel waits us in the bay;
Thanks for your proffer—have good day."—
"Was that your galley, then, which rode
Not far from shore when evening glowed?"—
"It was."—"Then spare your needless pain,
There will she now be sought in vain.
We saw her from the mountain head,
When with St. George's blazon red
A southern vessel bore in sight,
And yours raised sail, and took to flight."—

XXI.

"Now, by the rood, unwelcome news!"
Thus with Lord Ronald communed Bruce;
"Nor rests there light enough to show
If this their tale be true or no.
The men seem bred of churlish kind,
Yet rugged brows have bosoms kind;
We will go with them—food and fire
And sheltering roof our wants require.
Sure guard 'gainst treachery will we keep,
And watch by turns our comrades' sleep.—
Good fellows, thanks; your guests we'll be,
And well will pay the courtesy.
Come, lead us where your lodging lies,—
—Nay, soft! we mix not companies.—
Show us the path o'er crag and stone,
And we will follow you;—lead on."—

XXII.

They reached the dreary cabin, made
Of sails against a rock displayed,
And there, on entering, found
A slender boy, whose form and mien
Ill suited with such savage scene,
In cap and cloak of velvet green,
Low seated on the ground.
His garb was such as minstrels wear,
Dark was his hue, and dark his hair,
His youthful cheek was marred by care,
His eyes in sorrow drowned.
"Whence this poor boy?"—As Ronald spoke,
The voice his trance of anguish broke;
As if awaked from ghastly dream,
He raised his head with start and scream,
And wildly gazed around;
Then to the wall his face he turned,
And his dark cheek with blushes burned.

XXIII.

"Whose is the boy?" again he said.
"By chance of war our captive made;
He may be yours, if you should hold
That music has more charms than gold;
For, though from earliest childhood mute,
The lad can deftly touch the lute,
And on the rote* and viol play,
And well can drive the time away
For those who love such glee;
For me, the favouring breeze, when loud
It pipes upon the galley's shroud,
Makes blither melody."—
"Hath he, then, sense of spoken sound?"—
"Aye; so his mother bade us know,
A crone in our late shipwreck drowned,
And hence the silly stripling's woe.
More of the youth I cannot say,
Our captive but since yesterday;
When wind and weather waxed so grim,
We little listed think of him.—
But why waste time in idle words?
Sit to your cheer—unbelt your swords."—
Sudden the captive turned his head,
And one quick glance to Ronald sped.
It was a keen and warning look,
And well the Chief the signal took.

XXIV.

"Kind host," he said, "our needs require
A separate board and separate fire;
For know, that on a pilgrimage
Wend I, my comrade, and this page.
And, sworn to vigil and to fast,
Long as this hallowed task shall last,
We never doff the plaid or sword,
Or feast us at a stranger's board;
And never share one common sleep,
But one must still his vigil keep.
Thus, for our separate use, good friend,
We'll hold this hut's remoter end."—
"A churlish vow," the elder said,
"And hard, methinks, to be obeyed.
How say you, if, to wreak the scorn
That pays our kindness harsh return,
We should refuse to share our meal?"—
—"Then say we, that our swords are steel!
And our vow binds us not to fast,
Where gold or force may buy repast."—
Their host's dark brow grew keen and fell,
His teeth are clenched, his features swell;

* A kind of cymbal, said to be the same as the hurdy-gurdy.—*Halliwell.*

Yet sunk the felon's moody ire
Before Lord Ronald's glance of fire,
Nor could his craven courage brook
The Monarch's calm and dauntless look.
With laugh constrained,—" Let every man
Follow the fashion of his clan!
Each to his separate quarters keep,
And feed or fast, or wake or sleep."—

XXV.

Their fire at separate distance burns,
By turns they eat, keep guard by turns;
For evil seemed that old man's eye,
Dark and designing, fierce yet shy.
Still he avoided forward look,
But slow and circumspectly took
A circling, never-ceasing glance,
By doubt and cunning marked at once,
Which shot a mischief-boding ray,
From under eyebrows shagged and grey.
The younger, too, who seemed his son,
Had that dark look, the timid shun;
The half-clad serfs behind them sate,
And scowled a glare 'twixt fear and hate—
Till all, as darkness onward crept,
Couched down and seemed to sleep, or slept.
Nor he, that boy, whose powerless tongue
Must trust his eyes to wail his wrong,
A longer watch of sorrow made,
But stretched his limbs to slumber laid.

XXVI.

Not in his dangerous host confides
The King, but wary watch provides.
Ronald keeps ward till midnight past,
Then wakes the King, young Allan last;
Thus ranked, to give the youthful Page
The rest required by tender age.
—What is Lord Ronald's wakeful thought,
To chase the languor toil had brought?—
(For deem not that he deigned to throw
Much care upon such coward foe,)—
He thinks of lovely Isabel,
When at her foeman's feet she fell,
Nor less when, placed in princely selle,
She glanced on him with favouring eyes,
At Woodstock when he won the prize.
Nor, fair in joy, in sorrow fair,
In pride of place as 'mid despair,
Must she alone engross his care.
His thoughts to his betrothèd bride,
To Edith, turn—O how decide,

When here his love and heart are given,
And there his faith stands plight to Heaven!
No drowsy ward 'tis his to keep,
For seldom lovers long for sleep.
Till sung his midnight hymn the owl,
Answered the dog-fox with his howl,
Then waked the King—at his request,
Lord Ronald stretched himself to rest.

XXVII.

What spell was good King Robert's, say,
To drive the weary night away?
His was the patriot's burning thought,
Of Freedom's battle bravely fought,
Of castles stormed, of cities freed,
Of deep design and daring deed,
Of England's roses reft and torn,
And Scotland's cross in triumph worn,
Of rout and rally, war and truce,—
As heroes think, so thought the Bruce.
No marvel, 'mid such musings high,
Sleep shunned the monarch's thoughtful eye.
Now over Coolin's eastern head
The greyish light begins to spread,
The otter to his cavern drew,
And clamoured shrill the wakening mew;
Then watched the Page—to needful rest
The King resigned his anxious breast.

XXVIII.

To Allan's eyes was harder task,
The weary watch their safeties ask.
He trimmed the fire, and gave to shine
With bickering light the splintered pine;
Then gazed a while, where silent laid
Their hosts were shrouded by the plaid.
But little fear waked in his mind,
For he was bred of martial kind,
And, if to manhood he arrive,
May match the boldest knight alive.
Then thought he of his mother's tower,
His little sisters' green-wood bower,
How there the Easter-gambols pass,
And of Dan Joseph's lengthened mass.
But still before his weary eye
In rays prolonged the blazes die—
Again he roused him—on the lake
Looked forth, where now the twilight-flake
Of pale cold dawn began to wake.
On Coolin's cliffs the mist lay furled,
The morning breeze the lake had curled,
The short dark waves, heaved to the land,
With ceaseless plash kissed cliff or sand;—

It was a slumb'rous sound—he turned
To tales at which his youth had burned,
Of pilgrim's path by demon crossed,
Of sprightly elf or yelling ghost,
Of the wild witch's baneful cot,
And mermaid's alabaster grot,
Who bathes her limbs in sunless well
Deep in Strath-aird's enchanted cell.*
Thither in fancy rapt he flies,
And on his sight the vaults arise;
That hut's dark walls he sees no more,
His foot is on the marble floor,

*Imagination can hardly conceive anything more beautiful than the extraordinary grotto discovered not many years since upon the estate of Alexander Mac-Allister, Esq., of Strath-aird. It has since been much and deservedly celebrated, and a full account of its beauties has been published by Dr. Mac-Leay of Oban. It has been thus described:—

"The first entrance to this celebrated cave is rude and unpromising; but the light of the torches with which we were provided, was soon reflected from the roof, floor and walls, which seem as if they were sheeted with marble, partly smooth, partly rough with frost-work and rustic ornaments, and partly seeming to be wrought into statuary. The floor forms a steep and difficult ascent, and might be fancifully compared to a sheet of water, which, while it rushed whitening and foaming down a declivity, had been suddenly arrested and consolidated by the spell of an enchanter. Upon attaining the summit of this ascent, the cave opens into a splendid gallery, adorned with the most dazzling crystallizations, and finally descends with rapidity to the brink of a pool, of the most limpid water, about four or five yards broad. There opens beyond this pool a portal arch, formed by two columns of white spar, with beautiful chasings upon the sides, which promises a continuation of the cave. One of our sailors swam across, for there is no other mode of passing, and informed us (as indeed we partly saw by the light he carried), that the enchantment of Maccalister's cave terminates with this portal, a little beyond which there was only a rude cavern, speedily choked with stones and earth. But the pool on the brink of which we stood, surrounded by the most fanciful mouldings, in a substance resembling white marble, and distinguished by the depth and purity of its waters, might have been the bathing grotto of a naiad. The groups of combined figures projecting, or embossed, by which the pool is surrounded, are exquisitely elegant and fanciful. A statuary might catch beautiful hints from the singular and romantic disposition of these stalactites. There is scarce a form, or group, on which active fancy may not trace figures or grotesque ornaments, which have been gradually moulded in this cavern by the dropping of the calcareous water hardening into petrifactions Many of those fine groups have been injured by the senseless rage of appropriation of recent tourists, and the grotto has lost (I am informed), through the smoke of torches, something of that vivid silver tint which was originally one of its chief distinctions. But enough of beauty remains to compensate for all that may be lost."—Mr Mac-Allister of Strath-aird has, with great propriety, built up the exterior entrance to this cave, in order that strangers may enter properly attended by a guide, to prevent any repetition of the wanton and selfish injury which this singular scene has already sustained.

And o'er his head the dazzling spars
Gleam like a firmament of stars!
—Hark! hears he not the sea-nymph speak
Her anger in that thrilling shriek?
No! all too late, with Allan's dream
Mingled the captive's warning scream!
As from the ground he strives to start,
A ruffian's dagger finds his heart!
Upward he casts his dizzy eyes, . . .
Murmurs his master's name, . . . and dies!

XXIX.

Not so awoke the King! his hand
Snatched from the flame a knotted brand,
The nearest weapon of his wrath;
With this he crossed the murderer's path,
And venged young Allan well!
The spattered brain and bubbling blood
Hissed on the half-extinguished wood,
The miscreant gasped and fell!
Nor rose in peace the Island Lord;
One caitiff died upon his sword,
And one beneath his grasp lies prone,
In mortal grapple over-thrown.
But while Lord Ronald's dagger drank
The life-blood from his panting flank,
The Father-ruffian of the band
Behind him rears a coward hand!
—O for a moment's aid,
Till Bruce, who deals no double blow,
Dash to the earth another foe,
Above his comrade laid!—
And it is gained—the captive sprung
On the raised arm, and closely clung,
And, ere he shook him loose,
The mastered felon pressed the ground,
And gasped beneath a mortal wound,
While o'er him stands the Bruce.

XXX.

"Miscreant! while lasts thy flitting spark,
Give me to know the purpose dark,
That armed thy hand with murderous knife,
Against offenceless stranger's life?"—
—"No stranger thou!" with accent fell,
Murmured the wretch; "I know thee well;
And know thee for the foeman sworn
Of my high chief, the mighty Lorn."—
—"Speak yet again, and speak the truth
For thy soul's sake!—from whence this youth?
His country, birth, and name declare
And thus one evil deed repair."—

—"Vex me no more! . . . my blood runs cold . . .
No more I know than I have told.
We found him in a bark we sought
With different purpose . . . and I thought" . . .
Fate cut him short; in blood and broil,
As he had lived, died Cormac Doil.

XXXI.

Then resting on his bloody blade,
The valiant Bruce to Ronald said,
"Now shame upon us both!—that boy
Lifts his mute face to heaven,
And clasps his hands, to testify
His gratitude to God on high,
For strange deliverance given.
His speechless gesture thanks hath paid,
Which our free tongues have left unsaid!"—
He raised the youth with kindly word,
But marked him shudder at the sword;
He cleansed it from its hue of death,
And plunged the weapon in its sheath.
"Alas, poor child! unfitting part
Fate doomed, when with so soft a heart,
And form so slight as thine,
She made thee first a pirate's slave,
Then, in his stead, a patron gave
Of wayward lot like mine;
A landless prince, whose wandering life
Is but one scene of blood and strife—
Yet scant of friends the Bruce shall be,
But he'll find resting-place for thee.-
Come, noble Ronald! o'er the dead
Enough thy generous grief is paid,
And well has Allan's fate been wroke;*—
Come, wend we hence, the day has broke,
Seek we our bark—I trust the tale
Was false, that she had hoisted sail."—

XXXII.

Yet, ere they left that charnel-cell,
The Island Lord bade sad farewell
To Allan:—"Who shall tell this tale,"
He said, "in halls of Donagaile!
Oh, who his widowed mother tell,
That, ere his bloom, her fairest fell!—
Rest thee, poor youth! and trust my care,
For mass and knell and funeral prayer;
While o'er those caitiffs, where they lie,
The wolf shall snarl, the raven cry!"—
And now the eastern mountain's head
On the dark lake threw lustre red;

* Avenged.—*Halliwell.*

Bright gleams of gold and purple streak
Ravine and precipice and peak—
(So earthly power at distance shows;
Reveals his splendour, hides his woes.)
O'er sheets of granite dark and broad,
Rent and unequal, lay the road.
In sad discourse the warriors wind,
And the mute Page moves slow behind.

CANTO FOURTH.

I.

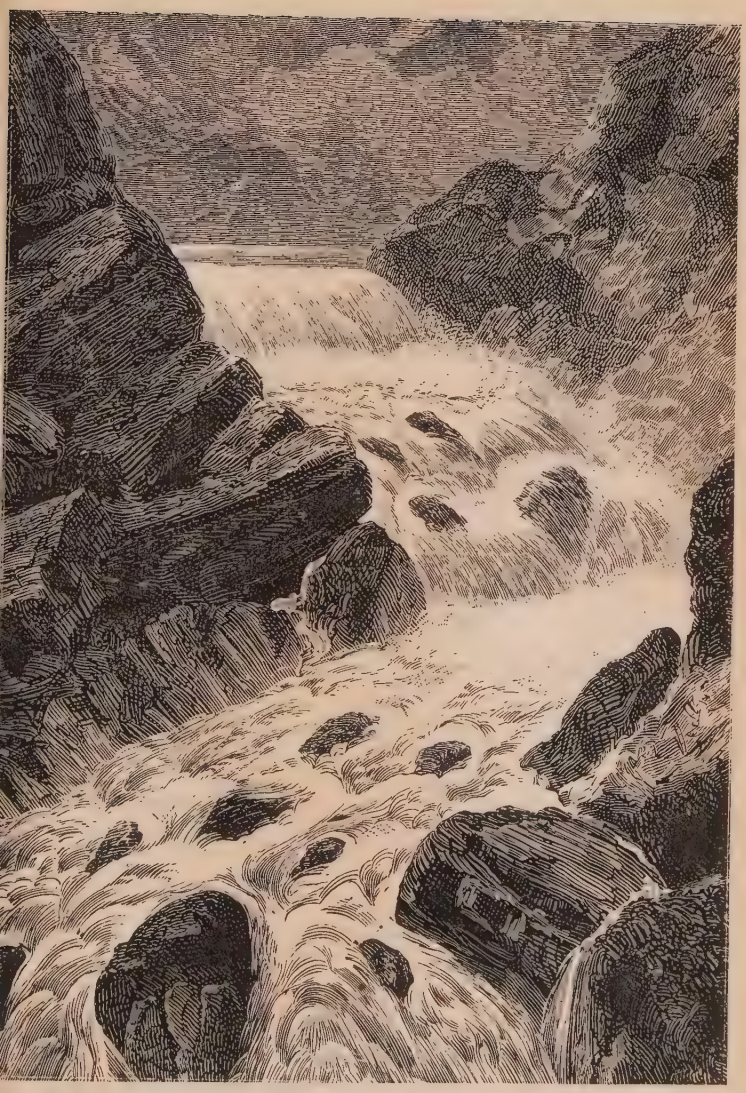
STRANGER! if e'er thine ardent step hath traced
The northern realms of ancient Caledon,
Where the proud Queen of Wilderness hath placed,
By lake and cataract, her lonely throne;
Sublime but sad delight thy soul hath known,
Gazing on pathless glen and mountain high,
Listing where from the cliffs the torrents thrown
Mingle their echoes with the eagle's cry,
And with the sounding lake, and with the moaning sky.

Yes! 'twas sublime, but sad.—The loneliness
Loaded thy heart, the desert tired thine eye;
And strange and awful fears began to press
Thy bosom with a stern solemnity.
Then hast thou wished some woodman's cottage nigh,
Something that showed of life, though low and mean;
Glad sight, its curling wreath of smoke to spy,
Glad sound, its cock's blithe carol would have been,
Or children whooping wild beneath the willows green.

Such are the scenes, where savage grandeur wakes
An awful thrill that softens into sighs;
Such feelings rouse them by dim Rannoch's lakes,
In dark Glencoe such gloomy raptures rise;
Or farther, where, beneath the northern skies,
Chides wild Loch-Eribol his caverns hoar—
But, be the minstrel judge, they yield the prize
Of desert dignity to that dread shore,
That sees grim Coolin rise, and hears Coriskin roar.

II.

Through such wild scenes the champions passed,
When bold halloo and bugle-blast
Upon the breeze came loud and fast.
"There," said the Bruce, "blew Edward's horn!
What can have caused such brief return?
And see, brave Ronald,—see him dart
O'er stock and stone like hunted hart



"Listing where from the cliffs the torrents thrown
Mingle their echoes with the eagle's cry."

Precipitate, as is the use,
In war or sport, of Edward Bruce.
—He marks us, and his eager cry
Will tell his news e'er he be nigh."—

III.

Loud Edward shouts, "What make ye here,
Warring upon the mountain deer,
When Scotland wants her King?
A bark from Lennox crossed our track,
With her in speed I hurried back,
These joyful news to bring—
The Stuart stirs in Teviotdale,
And Douglas wakes his native vale,
Thy storm-tossed fleet hath won its way
With little loss to Brodick-Bay,
And Lennox, with a gallant band,
Waits but thy coming and command
To waft them o'er to Carrick strand.
There are blithe news!—but mark the close!
Edward, the deadliest of our foes,
As with his host he northward passed,
Hath on the Borders breathed his last."—

IV.

Still stood the Bruce—his steady cheek
Was little wont his joy to speak,
But then his colour rose:
"Now, Scotland! shortly shalt thou see,
With God's high will, thy children free,
And vengeance on thy foes!
Yet to no sense of selfish wrongs,
Bear witness with me Heaven, belongs
My joy o'er Edward's bier;
I took my knighthood at his hand,
And lordship held of him, and land,
And well may vouch it here,
That, blot the story from his page
Of Scotland ruined in his rage,
You read a monarch brave and sage,
And to his people dear."—
"Let London's burghers mourn her Lord,
And Croydon monks his praise record,"
The eager Edward said;
"Eternal as his own, my hate
Surmounts the bounds of mortal fate,
And dies not with the dead!
Such hate was his on Solway's strand,
When vengeance clenched his palsied hand,
That pointed yet to Scotland's land,*
As his last accents prayed

* To establish his dominion in Scotland had been a favourite object of Edward's ambition, and nothing could exceed the pertina-

Disgrace and curse upon his heir,
If he one Scottish head should spare,
Till stretched upon the bloody lair
Each rebel corpse was laid!
Such hate was his, when his last breath
Renounced the peaceful house of death,
And bade his bones to Scotland's coast
Be borne by his remorseless host,
As if his dead and stony eye
Could still enjoy her misery!
Such hate was his,—dark, deadly, long;
Mine,—as enduring, deep, and strong!"—

V.

"Let women, Edward, war with words,
With curses monks, but men with swords:
Nor doubt of living foes, to sate
Deepest revenge and deadliest hate.
Now, to the sea! behold the beach,
And see the galleys' pendants stretch
Their fluttering length down favouring gale!
Aboard, aboard! and hoist the sail.
Hold we our way for Arran first,
Where meet in arms our friends dispersed;
Lennox the loyal, De la Haye,
And Boyd the bold in battle fray.
I long the hardy band to head,
And see once more my standard spread.—
Does noble Ronald share our course,
Or stay to raise his island force?"—
"Come weal, come woe, by Bruce's side,"
Replied the Chief, "will Ronald bide.
And since two galleys yonder ride,
Be mine, so please my liege, dismissed
To wake to arms the clans of Uist,
And all who hear the Minche's roar,
On the Long Island's lonely shore.
The nearer Isles, with slight delay,
Ourselves may summon in our way;
And soon on Arran's shore shall meet,
With Torquil's aid, a gallant fleet,
If aught avails their Chieftain's hest
Among the islesmen of the west."—

VI.

Thus was their venturous counsel said.
But, ere their sails the galleys spread,
Coriskin dark and Coolin high
Echoed the dirge's doleful cry;

city with which he pursued it, except his inveterate resentment against the insurgents, who so frequently broke the English yoke when he deemed it most firmly riveted. His dying injunction to his son, Edward II., was, that he should prosecute the war against Scotland.

Along that sable lake passed slow,—
Fit scene for such a sight of woe,—
The sorrowing islesmen, as they bore
The murdered Allan to the shore.
At every pause, with dismal shout,
Their coronach of grief rung out,
And ever, when they moved again,
The pipes resumed their clamorous strain,
And, with the pibroch's shrilling wail,
Mourned the young heir of Donagaile.
Round and around, from cliff and cave,
His answer stern old Coolin gave,
Till high upon his misty side
Languished the mournful notes, and died.
For never sounds, by mortal made,
Attained his high and haggard head,
That echoes but the tempest's moan,
Or the deep thunder's rending groan.

VII.

Merrily, merrily, bounds the bark,
She bounds before the gale,
The mountain breeze from Ben-na-darch
Is joyous in her sail!
With fluttering sound like laughter hoarse,
The cords and canvass strain,
The waves, divided by her force,
In rippling eddies chased her course,
As if they laughed again.
Not down the breeze more blithely flew,
Skimming the wave, the light sea-mew
Than that gay galley bore
Her course upon that favouring wind,
And Coolin's crest has sunk behind,
And Slapin's caverned shore.
'Twas then that warlike signals wake
Dunscaith's dark towers and Eisord's lake,
And soon from Cavilgarrigh's head,
Thick wreaths of eddying smoke were spread;
A summons these of war and wrath
To the brave clans of Sleate and Strath.
And, ready at the sight,
Each warrior to his weapons sprung,
And targe upon his shoulder flung,
Impatient for the fight.
Mac-Kinnon's chief, in warfare grey,
Had charge to muster their array,
And guide their barks to Brodick-Bay.

VIII.

Signal of Ronald's high command,
A beacon gleamed o'er sea and land,

From Canna's* tower, that, steep and grey,
Like falcon-nest o'erhangs the bay.
Seek not the giddy crag to climb,
To view the turret scathed by time;
It is a task of doubt and fear
To aught but goat or mountain deer.
  But rest thee on the silver beach,
  And let the aged herdsman teach
    His tale of former day;
  His cur's wild clamour he shall chide,
  And for thy seat by ocean's side,
    His varied plaid display;
  Then tell, with Canna's Chieftain came,
  In ancient times, a foreign dame
    To yonder turret grey.
Stern was her Lord's suspicious mind,
Who in so rude a jail confined
  So soft and fair a thrall!
And oft when moon on ocean slept,
That lovely lady sate and wept
  Upon the castle-wall,
And turned her eye to southern climes,
And thought perchance of happier times,
And touched her lute by fits, and sung
Wild ditties in her native tongue.
And still, when on the cliff and bay
Placid and pale the moonbeams play,
  And every breeze is mute,
Upon the lone Hebridean's ear
Steals a strange pleasure mixed with fear,
While from that cliff he seems to hear
  The murmur of a lute,
And sounds, as of a captive lone,
That mourns her woes in tongue unknown.—
Strange is the tale—but all too long
Already hath it stayed the song—
  Yet who may pass them by,
That crag and tower in ruins grey,
Nor to their hapless tenant pay
  The tribute of a sigh!

IX.

Merrily, merrily, bounds the bark
  O'er the broad ocean driven,

*The little island of Canna, or Cannay, adjoins those of Rum and Muick, with which it forms one parish. In a pretty bay opening towards the east, there is a lofty and slender rock, detached from the shore. Upon the summit are the ruins of a very small tower, scarcely accessible by a steep and precipitous path. Here it is said one of the kings, or Lords of the Isles, confined a beautiful lady, of whom he was jealous. The ruins are of course haunted by her restless spirit, and many romantic stories are told by the aged people of the island, concerning her fate in life and her appearances after death.

Her path by Ronin's* mountains dark
The steersman's hand has given.
And Ronin's mountains dark have sent
Their hunters to the shore,
And each his ashen bow unbent,
And gave his pastime o'er,
And at the Island Lord's command,
For hunting-spear took warrior's brand.
On Scoor-Eigg next a warning light
Summoned her warriors to the fight;
A numerous race, ere stern Macleod
O'er their bleak shores in vengeance strode,†
When all in vain the ocean cave
Its refuge to his victims gave.
The Chief, relentless in his wrath,
With blazing heath blockades the path;
In dense and stifling volumes rolled,
The vapour filled the caverned Hold!
The warrior-threat, the infant's plain,
The mother's screams, were heard in vain;
The vengeful Chief maintains his fires,
Till in the vault a tribe expires!
The bones which strew that cavern's gloom,
Too well attest their dismal doom.

X.

Merrily, merrily, goes the bark
On a breeze from the northward free,
So shoots through the morning sky the lark,
Or the swan through the summer sea.
The shores of Mull on the eastward lay,
And Ulva dark and Colonsay,
And all the group of islets gay
That guard famed Staffa‡ round.
Then all unknown its columns rose,
Where dark and undisturbed repose
The cormorant had found,

* Ronin (popularly called Rum, a name which a poet may be pardoned for avoiding if possible) is a very rough and mountainous island, adjacent to those of Eigg and Cannay.

† These, and the following lines of the stanza, refer to a dreadful tale of feudal vengeance, of which unfortunately there are reliques that still attest the truth. Scoor-Eigg is a high peak in the centre of the small isle of Eigg, or Egg. It is well known to mineralogists, as affording many interesting specimens, and to others whom chance or curiosity may lead to the island, for the astonishing view of the mainland and neighbouring isles which it commands.

‡ Nothing can be more interesting than the varied appearance of the little archipelago of islets, of which Staffa is the most remarkable. This group, called in Gaelic, Tresharnish, affords a thousand varied views to the voyager, as they appear in different positions with reference to his course. The variety of their shape contributes much to the beauty of these effects.

And the shy seal had quiet home,
And weltered in that wondrous dome,
Where, as to shame the temples decked
By skill of earthly architect,
Nature herself, it seemed, would raise
A Minster to her Maker's praise!
Not for a meaner use ascend
Her columns, or her arches bend;
Nor of a theme less solemn tells
That mighty surge that ebbs and swells,
And still, between each awful pause,
From the high vault an answer draws,
In varied tone prolonged and high,
That mocks the organ's melody.
Nor doth its entrance front in vain
To old Iona's holy fane,
That Nature's voice might seem to say,
"Well hast thou done, frail Child of clay!
Thy humble powers that stately shrine
Tasked high and hard—but witness mine!"—

XI.

Merrily, merrily, goes the bark,
Before the gale she bounds;
So darts the dolphin from the shark,
Or the deer before the hounds.
They left Loch-Tua on their lee,
And they wakened the men of the wild Tiree,
And the Chief of the sandy Coll;
They paused not at Columba's isle,
Though pealed the bells from the holy pile
With long and measured toll;
No time for matin or for mass,
And the sounds of the holy summons pass
Away in the billows' roll.
Lochbuie's fierce and warlike Lord
Their signal saw, and grasped his sword,
And verdant Ilay called her host,
And the clans of Jura's rugged coast
Lord Ronald's call obey,
And Scarba's isle, whose tortured shore
Still rings to Corrievreken's roar,
And lonely Colonsay;
—Scenes sung by him who sings no more!*

* The ballad, entitled "Macphail of Colonsay, and the Mermaid of Corrievreken," was composed by John Leyden, from a tradition which he found while making a tour through the Hebrides about 1801, just before his fatal departure for India, where, after having made farther progress in Oriental literature than any man of letters who had embraced these studies, he died a martyr to his zeal for knowledge, in the island of Java, immediately after the landing of our forces near Batavia, in September, 1811.

His bright and brief career is o'er,
And mute his tuneful strains;
Quenched is his lamp of varied lore,
That loved the light of song to pour;
A distant and a deadly shore
Has LEYDEN'S cold remains!

XII.

Ever the breeze blows merrily,
But the galley ploughs no more the sea,
Lest, rounding wild Cantire, they meet
The southern foemen's watchful fleet,
They held unwonted way;—
Up Tarbat's western lake they bore,
Then dragged their bark the isthmus o'er,*
As far as Kilmaconnel's shore,
Upon the eastern bay.
It was a wondrous sight to see
Topmast and pennon glitter free,
High raised above the greenwood tree,
As on dry land the galley moves,
By cliff and copse and alder groves.
Deep import from that selcouth† sign,
Did many a mountain Seer divine,
For ancient legends told the Gael,
That when a royal bark should sail
O'er Kilmaconnel moss,
Old Albyn should in fight prevail,
And every foe should faint and quail
Before her silver Cross.

XIII.

Now launched once more, the inland sea
They furrow with fair augury,
And steer for Arran's isle;
The sun, ere yet he sunk behind
Ben-Ghoil, "The Mountain of the Wind,"
Gave his grim peaks a greeting kind,
And bade Loch-Ranza smile.‡
Thither their destined course they drew,
It seemed the isle her monarch knew,
So brilliant was the landward view,
The ocean so serene;

*The peninsula of Cantire is joined to South Knapdale by a very narrow isthmus, formed by the western and eastern Loch of Tarbat. These two salt-water lakes, or bays, encroach so far upon the land, and the extremities come so near each other, that there is not above a mile of land to divide them.

†Wonderful.—*Wright.*

‡Loch-Ranza is a beautiful bay, on the northern extremity of Arran, opening towards East Tarbat Loch.

"Ben-Ghaoil, the Mountain of the Winds," is generally known by its English, and less poetical name, of Goatfield.

Each puny wave in diamonds rolled
O'er the calm deep, where hues of gold
With azure strove and green.
The hill, the vale, the tree, the tower,
Glowed with the tints of evening's hour,
The beach was silver sheen,
The wind breathed soft as lover's sigh,
And, oft renewed, seemed oft to die,
With breathless pause between.
O who, with speech of war and woes,
Would wish to break the soft repose
Of such enchanting scene!

XIV.

Is it of war Lord Ronald speaks?
The blush that dyes his manly cheeks,
The timid look, and down-cast eye,
And faltering voice, the theme deny.
And good King Robert's brow expressed,
He pondered o'er some high request,
As doubtful to approve;
Yet in his eye and lip the while
Dwelt the half-pitying glance and smile,
Which manhood's graver mood beguile,
When lovers talk of love.
Anxious his suit Lord Ronald pled;
—"And for my bride betrothed," he said,
"My Liege has heard the rumour spread
Of Edith from Artornish fled.
Too hard her fate—I claim no right
To blame her for her hasty flight;
Be joy and happiness her lot!—
But she hath fled the bridal-knot,
And Lorn recalled his promise plight,
In the assembled Chieftains' sight.—
When, to fulfil our father's band,
I proffered all I could—my hand—
I was repulsed with scorn;
Mine honour I should ill assert,
And worse the feelings of my heart,
If I should play a suitor's part
Again, to pleasure Lorn."—

XV.

"Young Lord," the royal Bruce replied,
"That question must the Church decide;
Yet seems it hard, since rumours state
Edith takes Clifford for her mate,
The very tie, which she hath broke,
To thee should still be binding yoke
But, for my sister Isabel—
The mood of woman who can tell?

I guess the Champion of the Rock,
Victorious in the tourney shock,
That knight unknown, to whom the prize
She dealt,—had favour in her eyes;
But since our brother Nigel's fate,
Our ruined house and hapless state,
From worldly joy and hope estranged,
Much is the hapless mourner changed.
Perchance," here smiled the noble King,
"This tale may other musings bring.
Soon shall we know—yon mountains hide
The little convent of Saint Bride;
There, sent by Edward, she must stay,
Till fate shall give more prosperous day;
And thither will I bear thy suit,
Nor will thine advocate be mute."—

XVI.

As thus they talked in earnest mood,
That speechless boy beside them stood.
He stooped his head against the mast,
And bitter sobs came thick and fast,
A grief that would not be repressed,
But seemed to burst his youthful breast.
His hands, against his forehead held,
As if by force his tears repelled,
But through his fingers, long and slight,
Fast trilled the drops of crystal bright.
Edward, who walked the deck apart,
First spied this conflict of the heart.
Thoughtless as brave, with bluntness kind
He sought to cheer the sorrower's mind;
By force the slender hand he drew
From those poor eyes that streamed with dew.
As in his hold the stripling strove,—
('Twas a rough grasp, though meant in love,)
Away his tears the warrior swept,
And bade shame on him that he wept.
"I would to heaven, thy helpless tongue
Could tell me who hath wrought thee wrong!
For, were he of our crew the best,
The insult went not unredressed.
Come, cheer thee; thou art now of age
To be a warrior's gallant page;
Thou shalt be mine!—a palfrey fair
O'er hill and holt my boy shall bear,
To hold my bow in hunting grove,
Or speed on errand to my love;
For well I wot thou wilt not tell
The temple where my wishes dwell."—

XVII.

Bruce interposed,—"Gay Edward, no,
This is no youth to hold thy bow,
To fill thy goblet, or to bear
Thy message light to lighter fair.
Thou art a patron all too wild
And thoughtless, for this orphan child.
Seest thou not how apart he steals,
Keeps lonely couch, and lonely meals?
Fitter by far in yon calm cell
To tend our sister Isabel,
With father Augustin to share
The peaceful change of convent prayer,
Than wander wild adventures through,
With such a reckless guide as you."—
"Thanks, brother!" Edward answered gay,
"For the high laud thy words convey!
But we may learn some future day,
If thou or I can this poor boy
Protect the best, or best employ.
Meanwhile, our vessel nears the strand:
Launch we the boat, and seek the land."—

XVIII.

To land King Robert lightly sprung,
And thrice aloud his bugle rung
With note prolonged and varied strain,
Till bold Ben-ghoil replied again.
Good Douglas then, and De la Haye,
Had in a glen a hart at bay,
And Lennox cheered the laggard hounds,
When waked that horn the green-wood bounds.
"It is the foe!" cried Boyd, who came
In breathless haste with eye on flame,—
"It is the foe!—Each valiant lord
Fling by his bow, and grasp his sword!"—
"Not so," replied the good Lord James,
"That blast no English bugle claims.
Oft have I heard it fire the fight,
Cheer the pursuit, or stop the flight.
Dead were my heart, and deaf mine ear,
If Bruce should call, nor Douglas hear!
Each to Loch-Ranza's margin spring;
That blast was winded by the King!"—

XIX.

Fast to their mates the tidings spread,
And fast to shore the warriors sped.
Bursting from glen and green-wood tree,
High waked their loyal jubilee!
Around the royal Bruce they crowd,
And clasped his hands, and wept aloud.

Veterans of early fields were there,
Whose helmets pressed their hoary hair,
Whose swords and axes bore a stain
From life-blood of the red-haired Dane;
And boys, whose hands scarce brooked to wield
The heavy sword or bossy shield.
Men too were there, that bore the scars
Impressed in Albyn's woeful wars,
At Falkirk's fierce and fatal flight,
Teyndrum's dread rout, and Methven's flight;
The might of Douglas there was seen,
There Lennox with his graceful mien;
Kirkpatrick, Closeburn's dreaded Knight;
The Lindsay, fiery, fierce, and light;
The Heir of murdered De la Haye,
And Boyd the grave, and Seton gay.
Around their King regained they pressed,
Wept, shouted, clasped him to their breast,
And young and old, and serf and lord,
And he who ne'er unsheathed a sword,
And he in many a peril tried,
Alike resolved the brunt to bide,
And live or die by Bruce's side!

XX.

Oh, War! thou hast thy fierce delight,
Thy gleams of joy, intensely bright!
Such gleams, as from thy polished shield
Fly dazzling o'er the battle-field!
Such transports wake, severe and high,
Amid the pealing conquest-cry;
Scarce less, when, after battle lost,
Muster the remnants of a host,
And as each comrade's name they tell,
Who in the well-fought conflict fell,
Knitting stern brow o'er flashing eye,
Vow to avenge them or to die!—
Warriors!—and where are warriors found,
If not on martial Britain's ground?
And who, when waked with note of fire,
Love more than they the British lyre?—
Know ye not,—hearts to honour dear!
That joy, deep-thrilling, stern, severe,
At which the heart-strings vibrate high,
And wake the fountains of the eye?
And blame ye then, the Bruce, if trace
Of tear is on his manly face,
When, scanty relics of the train
That hailed at Scone his early reign,
This patriot band around him hung,
And to his knees and bosom clung?—

Blame ye the Bruce?—his brother blamed,
But shared the weakness, while ashamed,
With haughty laugh his head he turned,
And dashed away the tear he scorned.*

XXI.

'Tis morning, and the Convent bell
Long time had ceased its matin knell,
Within thy walls, Saint Bride!
An aged Sister sought the cell
Assigned to Lady Isabel,
And hurriedly she cried,
"Haste, gentle Lady, haste—there waits
A noble stranger at the gates;
Saint Bride's poor votaress ne'er has seen
A Knight of such a princely mien;
His errand, as he bade me tell,
Is with the Lady Isabel."—
The princess rose,—for on her knee
Low bent she told her rosary,†
"Let him by thee his purpose teach;
I may not give a stranger speech."—
"Saint Bride forefend, thou royal Maid!"
The portress crossed herself, and said,—
"Not to be prioress might I
Debate his will, his suit deny."—
"Has earthly show then, simple fool,
Power o'er a sister of thy rule,
And art thou like the worldly train,
Subdued by splendours light and vain?"—

XXII.

"No, Lady! in old eyes like mine,
Gauds have no glitter, gems no shine;
Nor grace his rank attendants vain,
One youthful page is all his train.
It is the form, the eye, the word,
The bearing of that stranger Lord;
His stature, manly, bold, and tall,
Built like a castle's battled wall,
Yet moulded in such just degrees,
His giant-strength seems lightsome ease.
Close as the tendrils of the vine
His locks upon his forehead twine,
Jet-black, save where some touch of grey
Has ta'en the youthful hue away.

* The kind and yet fiery character of Edward Bruce is well painted by Barbour.

† Edward started with the Lady Isabel for Ireland, but suddenly returned, telling Bruce, in explanation of his "brief return," that

"A bark from Lennox crossed our track,
With her in speed I hurried back"—(canto iv. 8);

thus, without reaching Ireland, bringing his sister back to Scotland.

Weather and war their rougher trace
Have left on that majestic face:—
But 'tis his dignity of eye!
There, if a suppliant, would I fly,
Secure, 'mid danger, wrongs, and grief,
Of sympathy, redress, relief—
That glance, if guilty, would I dread
More than the doom that spoke me dead!"—
"Enough, enough," the princess cried,
"'Tis Scotland's hope, her joy, her pride!
To meaner front was ne'er assigned
Such mastery o'er the common mind—
Bestowed thy high designs to aid,
How long, O Heaven! how long delayed!—
Haste, Mona, haste, to introduce
My darling brother, royal Bruce!"—

XXIII.

They met like friends who part in pain,
And meet in doubtful hope again.
But when subdued that fitful swell,
The Bruce surveyed the humble cell;—
"And this is thine, poor Isabel,—
That pallet-couch, and naked wall,
For room of state, and bed of pall;
For costly robes and jewels rare,
A string of beads and zone of hair;
And for the trumpet's sprightly call
To sport or banquet, grove or hall,
The bell's grim voice divides thy care,
'Twixt hours of penitence and prayer!—
O ill for thee, my royal claim
From the First David's sainted name!
O woe for thee, that while he sought
His right, thy brother feebly fought!"—

XXIV.

"Now lay these vain regrets aside,
And be the unshaken Bruce!" she cried,
"For more I glory to have shared
The woes thy venturous spirit dared,
When raising first thy valiant band
In rescue of thy native land,
Than had fair Fortune set me down
The partner of an empire's crown.
And grieve not that on Pleasure's stream
No more I drive in giddy dream,
For Heaven the erring pilot knew,
And from the gulph the vessel drew,
Tried me with judgments stern and great,
My house's ruin, thy defeat,
Poor Nigel's death, till, tamed, I own,
My hopes are fixed on Heaven alone;

Nor e'er shall earthly prospects win
My heart to this vain world of sin."—

XXV.

"Nay, Isabel, for such stern choice,
First wilt thou wait thy brother's voice;
Then ponder if in convent scene
No softer thoughts might intervene—
Say they were of that unknown Knight
Victor in Woodstock's tourney-fight—
Nay if his name such blush you owe,
Victorious o'er a fairer foe!"—
Truly his penetrating eye
Hath caught that blush s passing dye,—
Like the last beam of evening thrown
On a white cloud.—just seen and gone.
Soon with calm cheek and steady eye,
The princess made composed reply:—
"I guess my brother's meaning well;
For not so silent is the cell,
But we have heard the islesmen all
Arm in thy cause at Ronald's call,
And mine eye proves that Knight Unknown
And the brave Island Lord are one.—
Had then his suit been earlier made,
In his own name, with thee to aid,
(But that his plighted faith forbade,)
I know not. . . . But thy Page so near?—
This is no tale for menial's ear."—

XXVI.

Still stood that Page, as far apart
As the small cell would space afford;
With dizzy eye and bursting heart,
He leant his weight on Bruce's sword,
The monarch's mantle too he bore,
And drew the fold his visage o'er.
"Fear not for him—in murderous strife,"
Said Bruce, "his warning saved my life;
Full seldom parts he from my side;
And in his silence I confide,
Since he can tell no tale again.—
He is a boy of gentle strain,
And I have purposed he shall dwell
In Augustin the chaplain's cell,
And wait on thee, my Isabel.—
Mind not his tears; I've seen them flow,
As in the thaw dissolves the snow.
'Tis a kind youth, but fanciful,
Unfit against the tide to pull,
And those that with the Bruce would sail,
Must learn to strive with stream and gale.—
But forward, gentle Isabel—
My answer for Lord Ronald tell."—

XXVII.

"This answer be to Ronald given—
The heart he asks is fixed on heaven.
My love was like a summer flower,
That withered in the wintry hour,
Born but of vanity and pride,
And with these sunny visions died.
If further press his suit—then say,
He should his plighted troth obey,
Troth plighted both with ring and word,
And sworn on crucifix and sword.—
Oh, shame thee, Robert! I have seen
Thou hast a woman's guardian been!
Even in extremity's dread hour,
When pressed on thee the Southern power,
And safety, to all human sight,
Was only found in rapid flight,
Thou heardst a wretched female plain
In agony of travail-pain,
And thou didst bid thy little band
Upon the instant turn and stand,
And dare the worst the foe might do,
Rather than, like a knight untrue,
Leave to pursuers merciless
A woman in her last distress.*—
And wilt thou now deny thine aid
To an oppressed and injured maid,
Even plead for Ronald's perfidy,
And press his fickle faith on me?—
So witness Heaven, as true I vow,
Had I those earthly feelings now,
Which could my former bosom move
Ere taught to set its hopes above,
I'd spurn each proffer he could bring,
Till at my feet he laid the ring,
The ring and spousal contract both,
And fair acquittal of his oath,
By her who brooks his perjured scorn,
The ill-requited Maid of Lorn!"—

XXVIII.

With sudden impulse forward sprung
The Page, and on her neck he hung;
Then, recollected instantly,
His head he stooped, and bent his knee,

* This incident, which illustrates so happily the chivalrous generosity of Bruce's character, is one of the many simple and natural traits recorded by Barbour. It occurred during the expedition which Bruce made to Ireland, to support the pretensions of his brother Edward to the throne of that kingdom. Bruce was about to retreat, and his host was arrayed for moving.

Kissed twice the hand of Isabel,
Arose, and sudden left the cell.—
The princess, loosened from his hold
Blushed angry at his bearing bold;
But good King Robert cried,
"Chafe not—by signs he speaks his mind,
He heard the plan my care designed,
Nor could his transports hide.—
But, sister, now bethink thee well;
No easy choice the convent cell;
Trust, I shall play no tyrant part,
Either to force thy hand or heart,
Or suffer that Lord Ronald scorn,
Or wrong for thee, the Maid of Lorn.
But think,—not long the time has been,
That thou wert wont to sigh unseen,
And wouldst the ditties best approve,
That told some lay of hapless love.
Now are thy wishes in thy power,
And thou art bent on cloister-bower!
O! if our Edward knew the change,
How would his busy satire range,
With many a sarcasm varied still
On woman's wish, and woman's will!"—

XXIX.

"Brother, I well believe," she said,
"Even so would Edward's part be played,
Kindly in heart, in word severe,
A foe to thought, and grief, and fear,
He holds his humour uncontrolled;
But thou art of another mould.
Say then to Ronald, as I say,
Unless before my feet he lay
The ring which bound the faith he swore,
By Edith freely yielded o'er,
He moves his suit to me no more.
Nor do I promise, even if now
He stood absolved of spousal vow,
That I would change my purpose made,
To shelter me in holy shade.—
Brother, for little space, farewell!
To other duties warns the bell."—

XXX.

"Lost to the world," King Robert said,
When he had left the royal maid,
"Lost to the world by lot severe,
O what a gem lies buried here,
Nipped by misfortune's cruel frost,
The buds of fair affection lost!—
But what have I with love to do?
Far sterner cares my lot pursue.

—Pent in this isle we may not lie,
Nor would it long our wants supply.
Right opposite, the mainland towers
Of my own Turnberry court our powers—
—Might not my father's beadsman hoar,
Cuthbert, who dwells upon the shore,
Kindle a signal-flame, to show
The time propitious for the blow?—
It shall be so—some friend shall bear
Our mandate with despatch and care;
Edward shall find the messenger.
That fortress ours, the island fleet
May on the coast of Carrick meet.—
O Scotland! shall it e'er be mine
To wreak thy wrongs in battle-line,
To raise my victor head, and see
Thy hills, thy dales, thy people free,—
That glance of bliss is all I crave,
Betwixt my labours and my grave!"—
Then down the hill he slowly went,
Oft pausing on the steep descent,
And reached the spot where his bold train
Held rustic camp upon the plain.

CANTO FIFTH.

I.

On fair Loch-Ranza streamed the early day,
Thin wreaths of cottage-smoke are upward curled
From the lone hamlet, which her inland bay
And circling mountains sever from the world.
And there the fisherman his sail unfurled,
The goat-herd drove his kids to steep Ben-Ghoil,
Before the hut the dame her spindle twirled,
Courting the sunbeam as she plied her toil,—
For, wake where'er he may, Man wakes to care and coil.

But other duties called each convent maid,
Roused by the summons of the moss-grown bell;
Sung were the matins and the mass was said,
And every sister sought her separate cell,
Such was the rule, her rosary to tell.
And Isabel has knelt in lonely prayer;
The sunbeam, through the narrow lattice, fell
Upon the snowy neck and long dark hair,
As stooped her gentle head in meek devotion there.

II.

She raised her eyes, that duty done,
When glanced upon the pavement stone,

Gemmed and enchased, a golden ring,
Bound to a scroll with silken string,
With few brief words inscribed to tell,
"This for the Lady Isabel."
Within, the writing farther bore,—
"'Twas with this ring his plight he swore,
With this his promise I restore;
To her who can the heart command,
Well may I yield the plighted hand.
And O! for better fortune born,
Grudge not a passing sigh to mourn
Her who was Edith once of Lorn!"
One single flash of glad surprise
Just glanced from Isabel's dark eyes,
But vanished in the blush of shame,
That, as its penance, instant came.
"O thought unworthy of my race!
Selfish, ungenerous, mean, and base,
A moment's throb of joy to own,
That rose upon her hopes o'erthrown!—
Thou pledge of vows too well believed,
Of man ingrate and maid deceived,
Think not thy lustre here shall gain
Another heart to hope in vain!
For thou shalt rest, thou tempting gaud,
Where worldly thoughts are overawed,
And worldly splendours sink debased."—
Then by the cross the ring she placed.

III.

Next rose the thought,—its owner far,
How came it here through bolt and bar?—
But the dim lattice is ajar—
She looks abroad—the morning dew
A light short step had brushed anew,
And there were foot-prints seen
On the carved buttress rising still,
Till on the mossy window-sill
Their track effaced the green.
The ivy twigs were torn and frayed,
As if some climber's steps to aid.—
But who the hardy messenger,
Whose venturous path these signs infer?—
"Strange doubts are mine!—Mona, draw nigh,
—Nought 'scapes old Mona's curious eye—
What strangers, gentle mother, say,
Have sought these holy walls to-day?"
"None, Lady, none of note or name;
Only your brother's foot-page came,
At peep of dawn—I prayed him pass
To chapel where they said the mass;
But like an arrow he shot by,
And tears seemed bursting from his eye."

IV.

The truth at once on Isabel,
As darted by a sunbeam, fell.—
"'Tis Edith's self!—her speechless woe,
Her form, her looks, the secret show!
—Instant, good Mona, to the bay,
And to my royal brother say,
I do conjure him seek my cell,
With that mute page he loves so well."—
"What! know'st thou not his warlike host
At break of day has left our coast?
My old eyes saw them from the tower.
At eve they couched in green-wood bower,
At dawn a bugle-signal, made
By their bold Lord, their ranks arrayed;
Up sprung the spears through bush and tree,
No time for benedicite!
Like deer, that, rousing from their lair,
Just shake the dew-drops from their hair,
And toss their armèd crests aloft,
Such matins theirs!"—"Good mother, soft—
Where does my brother bend his way?"—
"As I have heard, for Brodick-Bay,
Across the isle—of barks a score
Lie there, 'tis said, to waft them o'er,
On sudden news, to Carrick shore."—
"If such their purpose, deep the need,"
Said anxious Isabel, "of speed!
Call Father Augustin, good dame."—
The nun obeyed, the Father came.

V.

"Kind Father, hie without delay,
Across the hills to Brodick-Bay!
This message to the Bruce be given;
I pray him, by his hopes of Heaven,
That, till he speak with me, he stay!
Or, if his haste brook no delay,
That he deliver, on my suit,
Into thy charge that stripling mute.
Thus prays his sister Isabel,
For causes more than she may tell—
Away, good father!—take good heed,
That life and death are on thy speed."—
His cowl the good old priest did on,
Took his piked staff and sandalled shoon,
And, like a palmer bent by eld,
O'er moss and moor his journey held.

VI.

Heavy and dull the foot of age,
And rugged was the pilgrimage;

But none was there beside, whose care
Might such important message bear.
Through birchen copse he wandered slow,
Stunted and sapless, thin and low;
By many a mountain stream he passed,
From the tall cliffs in tumult cast,
Dashing to foam their waters dun,
And sparkling in the summer sun.
Round his grey head the wild curlew
In many a fearless circle flew.
O'er chasms he passed, where fractures wide
Craved wary eye and ample stride;*
He crossed his brow beside the stone,
Where Druids erst heard victims groan,
And at the cairns upon the wild,
O'er many a heathen hero piled,†
He breathed a timid prayer for those
Who died ere Shiloh's sun arose.
Beside Macfarlane's Cross he stayed,
There told his hours within the shade,
And at the stream his thirst allayed.
Thence onward journeying slowly still,
As evening closed he reached the hill,
Where, rising through the woodland green,
Old Brodick's Gothic towers were seen.
From Hastings, late their English Lord,
Douglas had won them by the sword.‡
The sun that sunk behind the isle,
Now tinged themwith a parting smile.

VII.

But though the beams of light decay,
'Twas bustle all in Brodick-Bay.
The Bruce's followers crowd the shore,
And boats and barges some unmoor,
Some raise the sail, some seize the oar;
Their eyes oft turned where glimmered far
What might have seemed an early star
On heaven's blue arch, save that its light
Was all too flickering, fierce, and bright.
Far distant in the south, the ray
Shone pale amid retiring day,

* The interior of the island of Arran abounds with beautiful Highland scenery.

† The Isle of Arran, like those of Man and Anglesea, abounds with many reliques of heathen, and probably Druidical, superstition. There are high erect columns of unhewn stone, the most early of all monuments, the circles of rude stones, commonly entitled Druidical, and the cairns, or sepulchral piles, within which are usually found urns inclosing ashes.

‡ Brodick or Brathwick castle, in the Isle of Arran, is an ancient fortress, near an open roadstead called Brodick Bay, and not far distant from a tolerable harbour, closed in by the island of Lamlash. Sir John Hastings was the English governor of Brodick.

But as, on Carrick shore,
Dim seen in outline faintly blue,
The shades of evening closer drew
It kindled more and more.
The Monk's slow steps now press the sands,
And now amid a scene he stands,
Full strange to churchman's eye;
Warriors, who, arming for the fight,
Rivet and clasp their harness light,
And twinkling spears, and axes bright,
And helmets flashing high;
Oft, too, with unaccustomed ears,
A language much unmeet* he hears,
While, hastening all on board,
As stormy as the swelling surge
That mixed its roar, the leaders urge
Their followers to the ocean verge,
With many a haughty word.

VIII.

Through that wild throng the Father passed,
And reached the Royal Bruce at last.
He leant against a stranded boat,
That the approaching tide must float,
And counted every rippling wave,
As higher yet her sides they lave,
And oft the distant fire he eyed,
And closer yet his hauberk tied,
And loosened in its sheath his brand.
Edward and Lennox were at hand,
Douglas and Ronald had the care
The soldiers to the barks to share.—
The Monk approached and homage paid;
"And art thou come," King Robert said,
"So far to bless us ere we part?"—
—"My Liege, and with a loyal heart!—
But other charge I have to tell,"—
And spoke the hest of Isabel.
—"Now by Saint Giles," the monarch cried,
"This moves me much!—this morning tide,

* Barbour, with great simplicity, gives an anecdote, from which it would seem that the vice of profane swearing, afterwards too general among the Scottish nation, was, at this time, confined to military men. As Douglas, after Bruce's return to Scotland, was roving about the mountainous country of Tweeddale, near the Water of Line, he chanced to hear some persons in a farm-house say "*the devil.*" Concluding, from this hardy expression, that the house contained warlike guests, he immediately assailed it, and had the good fortune to make prisoners Thomas Randolph, afterward the famous earl of Murray, and Alexander Stuart, Lord Bonkle. Both were then in the English interest, and had come into that country with the purpose of driving out Douglas. They afterwards ranked among Bruce's most zealous adherents.

I sent the stripling to Saint Bride,
With my commandment there to bide."—
—"Thither he came the portress showed,
But there, my Liege, made brief abode."—

IX.

"'Twas I," said Edward, "found employ
Of nobler import for the boy.
Deep pondering in my anxious mind,
A fitting messenger to find,
To bear thy written mandate o'er
To Cuthbert on the Carrick shore,
I chanced, at early dawn, to pass
The chapel gate to snatch a mass.
I found the stripling on a tomb
Low-seated, weeping for the doom
That gave his youth to convent-gloom.
I told my purpose, and his eyes
Flashed joyful at the glad surprise.
He bounded to the skiff, the sail
Was spread before a prosperous gale,
And well my charge he hath obeyed;
For, see! the ruddy signal made,
That Clifford, with his merry-men all,
Guards carelessly our father's hall."*—

X.

"O wild of thought, and hard of heart!"
Answered the Monarch, "on a part
Of such deep danger to employ
A mute, an orphan, and a boy!
Unfit for flight, unfit for strife,
Without a tongue to plead for life!
Now, were my right restored by Heaven,
Edward, my crown I would have given,
Ere, thrust on such adventure wild,
I perilled thus the helpless child."—
—Offended half, and half submiss,
"Brother and Liege, of blame like this,"
Edward replied, "I little dreamed.
A stranger messenger, I deemed,
Might safest seek the beadsman's cell,
Where all thy squires are known so well.
Noteless his presence, sharp his sense,
His imperfection his defence.
If seen, none can his errand guess;
If ta'en, his words no tale express—

* The remarkable circumstances by which Bruce was induced to enter Scotland, under the false idea that a signal-fire was lighted upon the shore near his maternal castle of Turnberry—the disappointment which he met with, and the train of success which arose out of that very disappointment, are all related by Barbour.

Methinks, too, yonder beacon's shine
Might expiate greater fault than mine."—
"Rash," said King Robert, "was the deed—
But it is done.—Embark with speed!—
Good Father, say to Isabel
How this unhappy chance befell;
If well we thrive on yonder shore,
Soon shall my care her page restore.
Our greeting to our sister bear,
And think of us in mass and prayer."—

XI.

"Aye!"—said the Priest, "while this poor hand
Can chalice raise or cross command,
While my old voice has accents' use,
Can Augustin forget the Bruce!"—
Then to his side Lord Ronald pressed,
And whispered, "Bear thou this request,
That when by Bruce's side I fight,
For Scotland's crown and freedom's right,
The princess grace her knight to bear
Some token of her favouring care;
It shall be shown where England's best
May shrink to see it on my crest.
And for the boy—since weightier care
For royal Bruce the times prepare,
The helpless youth is Ronald's charge,
His couch my plaid, his fence my targe."—
He ceased; for many an eager hand
Had urged the barges from the strand;
Their number was a score and ten;
They bore thrice three-score chosen men.
With such small force did Bruce at last
The die for death or empire cast!

XII.

Now on the darkening main afloat,
Ready and manned rocks every boat;
Beneath their oars the ocean's might
Was dashed to sparks of glimmering light.
Faint and more faint, as off they bore,
Their armour glanced against the shore,
And, mingled with the dashing tide,
Their murmuring voices distant died.—
"God speed them!" said the Priest, as dark
On distant billows glides each bark;
"O Heaven! when swords for freedom shine,
And monarch's right, the cause is thine!
Edge doubly every patriot blow!
Beat down the banners of the foe!
And be it to the Nations known,
That Victory is from God alone!"—

As up the hill his path he drew,
He turned his blessings to renew,
Oft turned, till on the darkened coast
All traces of their course were lost;
Then slowly bent to Brodick tower,
To shelter for the evening hour.

XIII.

In night the fairy prospects sink,
Where Cumray's isles, with verdant link
Close the fair entrance of the Clyde;
The woods of Bute no more descried,
Are gone—and on the placid sea
The rowers plied their task with glee,
While hands that knightly lances bore
Impatient aid the labouring oar.
The half-faced moon shone dim and pale,
And glanced against the whitened sail;
But on that ruddy beacon-light
Each steersman kept the helm aright,
And oft, for such the King's command,
That all at once might reach the strand,
From boat to boat loud shout and hail
Warned them to crowd or slacken sail.
South and by west the armada bore,
And near at length the Carrick shore.
As less and less the distance grows,
High and more high the beacon rose;
The light, that seemed a twinkling star,
Now blazed portentous, fierce, and far.
Dark-red the heaven above it glowed,
Dark-red the sea beneath it flowed,
Red rose the rocks on ocean's brim,
In blood-red light her islets swim;
Wild scream the dazzled sea-fowl gave,
Dropped from their crags on plashing wave;
The deer to distant covert drew,
The black-cock deemed it day, and crew.
Like some tall castle given to flame,
O'er half the land the lustre came.
"Now, good my Liege, and brother sage,
What think ye of mine elfin page?"—
"Row on!" the noble King replied,
"We'll learn the truth whate'er betide;
Yet sure the beadsman and the child
Could ne'er have waked that beacon wild."—

XIV.

With that the boats approached the land,
But Edward's grounded on the sand;
The eager knight leaped in the sea
Waist-deep, and first on shore was he,

Though every barge's hardy band
Contended which should gain the land,
When that strange light, which, seen afar,
Seemed steady as the polar star,
Now, like a prophet's fiery chair,
Seemed travelling the realms of air.
Wide o'er the sky the splendour glows,
As that portentous meteor rose;
Helm, axe, and falchion glittered bright,
And in the red and dusky light
His comrade's face each warrior saw,
Nor marvelled it was pale with awe.
Then high in air the beams were lost,
And darkness sunk upon the coast.—
Ronald to Heaven a prayer addressed,
And Douglas crossed his dauntless breast;
"Saint James protect us!" Lennox cried,
But reckless Edward spoke aside,
"Deem'st thou, Kirkpatrick, in that flame
Red Comyn's angry spirit came,
Or would thy dauntless heart endure
Once more to make assurance sure?"—
"Hush!" said the Bruce, "we soon shall know
If this be sorcerer's empty show,
Or stratagem of southern foe.
The moon shines out—upon the sand
Let every leader rank his band."—

XV.

Faintly the moon's pale beams supply
That ruddy light's unnatural dye,
The dubious cold reflection lay
On the wet sands and quiet bay.
Beneath the rocks King Robert drew
His scattered files to order due,
Till shield compact and serried spear
In the cool light shone blue and clear.
Then down a path that sought the tide,
That speechless page was seen to glide;
He knelt him lowly on the sand,
And gave a scroll to Robert's hand.
"A torch," the Monarch cried, "What, ho!
Now shall we Cuthbert's tidings know."—
But evil news the letters bare,
The Clifford's force was strong and ware,
Augmented, too, that very morn,
By mountaineers who came with Lorn.
Long harrowed by oppressor's hand,
Courage and faith had fled the land,
And over Carrick, dark and deep,
Had sunk dejection's iron sleep.—
Cuthbert had seen that beacon-flame,
Unwitting from what source it came.

Doubtful of perilous event,
Edward's mute messenger he sent,
If Bruce deceived should venture o'er,
To warn him from the fatal shore.

XVI.

As round the torch the leaders crowd,
Bruce read these chilling news aloud:
"What counsel, nobles, have we now?—
To ambush us in green-wood bough,
And take the chance which fate may send
To bring our enterprise to end,
Or shall we turn us to the main
As exiles, and embark again?"—
Answered fierce Edward, "Hap what may
In Carrick, Carrick's Lord must stay.
I would not minstrels told the tale,
Wild-fire or meteor made us quail."—
Answered the Douglas, "If my liege
May win yon walls by storm or siege,
Then were each brave and patriot heart
Kindled of new for loyal part."—
Answered Lord Ronald, "Not for shame
Would I that aged Torquil came,
And found, for all our empty boast,
Without a blow we fled the coast.
I will not credit that this land,
So famed for warlike heart and hand,
The nurse of Wallace and of Bruce,
Will long with tyrants hold a truce."—
"Prove we our fate—the brunt we'll bide!"
So Boyd and Haye and Lennox cried;
So said, so vowed, the leaders all;
So Bruce resolved: "And in my hall,
Since the bold Southern make their home,
The hour of payment soon shall come,
When, with a rough and rugged host,
Clifford may reckon to his cost.
Meantime, through well-known bosk and dell,
I'll lead where we may shelter well."—

XVII.

Now ask you whence that wondrous light,
Whose fairy glow beguiled their sight?—
It ne'er was known—yet grey-haired eld
A superstitious credence held,
That never did a mortal hand
Wake its broad glare on Carrick strand;*

* It is still generally reported, and religiously believed by many, that this fire was really the work of supernatural power, unassisted by the hand of any mortal being; and it is said, that, for several centuries, the flame rose yearly on the same hour of the same night of the year, on which the king first saw it from the turrets of Brodick

Nay, and that on the self-same night
When Bruce crossed o'er, still gleams the light.
Yearly it gleams o'er mount and moor,
And glittering wave and crimsoned shore—
But whether beam celestial, lent
By Heaven to aid the King's descent,
Or fire hell-kindled from beneath,
To lure him to defeat and death,
Or were it but some meteor strange,
Of such as oft through midnight range,
Startling the traveller late and lone,
I know not—and it ne'er was known.

XVIII.

Now up the rocky pass they drew,
And Ronald, to his promise true,
Still made his arm the stripling's stay
To aid him on the rugged way.
"Now cheer thee, simple Amadine!
Why throbs that silly heart of thine?"
—That name the pirates to their slave
(In Gaelic 'tis the Changeling) gave—
"Dost thou not rest thee on my arm?
Do not my plaid-folds hold thee warm?
Hath not the wild bull's treble hide
This targe for thee and me supplied?
Is not Clan-Colla's sword of steel?
And, trembler, canst thou terror feel?
Cheer thee, and still that throbbing heart;
From Ronald's guard thou shalt not part."—
—O! many a shaft, at random sent,
Finds mark the archer little meant!
And many a word, at random spoken,
May soothe or wound a heart that's broken!
Half soothed, half grieved, half terrified,
Close drew the page to Ronald's side;
A wild delirious thrill of joy
Was in that hour of agony,
As up the steepy pass he strove,
Fear, toil, and sorrow, lost in love!

XIX.

The barrier of that iron shore,
The rock's steep ledge, is now climbed o'er;

castle; and some go so far as to say, that if the exact time were known, it would be still seen. That this superstitious notion is very ancient, is evident from the place where the fire is said to have appeared, being called the Bogles' Brae, beyond the remembrance of man. In support of this curious belief, it is said that the practice of burning heath for the improvement of land was then unknown; that a spunkie (Jack o' lantern) could not have been seen across the breadth of the Frith of Clyde, between Ayrshire and Arran, and that the courier of Bruce was his kinsman, and never suspected of treachery.

And from the castle's distant wall,
From tower to tower the warders call:
The sound swings over land and sea,
And marks a watchful enemy.—
They gained the Chase, a wide domain,
Left for the Castle's sylvan reign,*
(Seek not the scene—the axe, the plough,
The boor's dull fence, have marred it now,)
But then, soft swept in velvet green
The plain with many a glade between,
Whose tangled alleys far invade
The depth of the brown forest shade.
Here the tall fern obscured the lawn,
Fair shelter for the sportive fawn;
There, tufted close with copse-wood green,
Was many a swelling hillock seen;
And all around was verdure meet
For pressure of the fairies' feet.
The glossy holly loved the park,
The yew-tree lent its shadow dark,
And many an old oak, worn and bare,
With all its shivered boughs, was there.
Lovely, between the moonbeams fell
On lawn and hillock, glade and dell.
The gallant Monarch sighed to see
These glades so loved in childhood free,
Bethinking that, as outlaw now,
He ranged beneath the forest bough.

XX.

Fast o'er the moon-light Chase they sped.
Well knew the band that measured tread,
When, in retreat or in advance,
The serried warriors move at once;
And evil were the luck, if dawn
Descried them on the open lawn.
Copses they traverse, brooks they cross,
Strain up the bank and o'er the moss.
From the exhausted page's brow
Cold drops of toil are streaming now;
With effort faint and lengthened pause,
His weary step the stripling draws.
"Nay, droop not yet!" the warrior said;
"Come, let me give thee ease and aid!
Strong are mine arms, and little care
A weight so slight as thine to bear.—

*The castle of Turnberry, on the coast of Ayrshire, was the property of Robert Bruce, in right of his mother. Around the castle was a level plain of about two miles in extent, forming the castle park. There could be nothing, I am informed, more beautiful than the copse-wood and verdure of this extensive meadow, before it was invaded by the plough-share.

What! wilt thou not?—capricious boy!—
Then thine own limbs and strength employ.
Pass but this night, and pass thy care,
I'll place thee with a lady fair,
Where thou shalt tune thy lute to tell
How Ronald loves fair Isabel!"—
Worn out, disheartened, and dismayed,
Here Amadine let go the plaid;
His trembling limbs their aid refuse,
He sunk among the midnight dews!

XXI.

What may be done?—the night is gone—
The Bruce's band moves swiftly on—
Eternal shame, if at the brunt
Lord Ronald grace not battle's front!—
"See yonder oak, within whose trunk
Decay a darkened cell hath sunk:
Enter, and rest thee there a space,
Wrap in my plaid thy limbs, thy face.
I will not be, believe me, far;
But must not quit the ranks of war.
Well will I mark the bosky bourne,
And soon, to guard thee hence, return.—
Nay, weep not so, thou simple boy!
But sleep in peace, and wake in joy."—
In sylvan lodging close bestowed,
He placed the page, and onward strode
With strength put forth, o'er moss and brook,
And soon the marching band o'ertook.

XXII.

Thus strangely left, long sobbed and wept
The page, till, wearied out, he slept—
A rough voice waked his dream—"Nay, here,
Here by this thicket, passed the deer—
Beneath that oak old Ryno stayed—
What have we here?—a Scottish plaid,
And in its folds a stripling laid?—
Come forth! thy name and business tell!—
What, silent?—then I guess thee well,
The spy that sought old Cuthbert's cell,
Wafted from Arran yester morn—
Come, comrades, we will straight return.
Our Lord may choose the rack should teach
To this young lurcher use of speech.
Thy bowstring, till I bind him fast."—
"Nay, but he weeps and stands aghast;
Unbound we'll lead him, fear it not;
'Tis a fair stripling, though a Scot."—
The hunters to the castle sped,
And there the hapless captive led.

XXIII.

Stout Clifford in the castle-court
Prepared him for the morning sport;
And now with Lorn held deep discourse,
Now gave command for hound and horse.
War-steeds and palfreys pawed the ground,
And many a deer-dog howled around.
To Amadine, Lorn's well-known word
Replying to that Southern Lord,
Mixed with this clanging din, might seem
The phantasm of a fevered dream.
The tone upon his ringing ears
Came like the sounds which fancy hears,
When in rude waves or roaring winds
Some words of woe the muser finds,
Until more loudly and more near,
Their speech arrests the page's ear.

XXIV.

"And was she thus," said Clifford, "lost?
The priest should rue it to his cost!
What says the Monk?"—"The holy Sire
Owns, that, in masquer's quaint attire,
She sought his skiff, disguised, unknown
To all except to him alone.
But, says the priest, a bark from Lorn
Laid them aboard that very morn,
And pirates seized her for their prey.
He proffered ransom-gold to pay,
And they agreed—but, ere told o'er,
The winds blow loud, the billows roar;
They severed, and they met no more.
He deems—such tempest vexed the coast—
Ship, crew, and fugitive, were lost.
—So let it be, with the disgrace
And scandal of her lofty race!
Thrice better she had ne'er been born,
Than brought her infamy on Lorn!"—

XXV.

Lord Clifford now the captive spied;—
"Whom, Herbert, hast thou there?" he cried.
"A spy we seized within the Chase,
A hollow oak his lurking-place."—
"What tidings can the youth afford?"—
"He plays the mute."—"Then noose a cord—
Unless brave Lorn reverse the doom,
For his plaid's sake."—"Clan-Colla's loom,"
Said Lorn, whose careless glances trace
Rather the vesture than the face,
"Clan-Colla's dames such tartans twine;
Wearer nor plaid claims care of mine.

Give him, if my advice you crave,
His own scathed oak; and let him wave
In air, unless, by terror wrung,
A frank confession find his tongue.—
Nor shall he die without his rite;
—Thou, Angus Roy, attend the sight,
And give Clan-Colla's dirge thy breath,
As they convey him to his death."—
"O brother! cruel to the last!"—
Through the poor captive's bosom passed
The thought, but, to his purpose true,
He said not, though he sighed, "Adieu!"

XXVI.

And will he keep his purpose still,
In sight of that last closing ill,
When one poor breath, one single word,
May freedom, safety, life, afford?
Can he resist the instinctive call,
For life that bids us barter all?—
Love, strong as death, his heart hath steeled,
His nerves hath strung—he will not yield!
Since that poor breath, that little word,
May yield Lord Ronald to the sword.—
Clan-Colla's dirge is pealing wide,
The grisly headsman 's by his side;
Along the green-wood Chase they bend,
And now their march has ghastly end!
That old and shattered oak beneath,
They destine for the place of death.
—What thoughts are his, while all in vain
His eye for aid explores the plain?
What thoughts, while, with a dizzy ear,
He hears the death-prayer muttered near?
And must he die such death accurst,
Or will that bosom-secret burst?
Cold on his brow breaks terror's dew,
His trembling lips are livid blue;
The agony of parting life
Has nought to match that moment's strife!

XXVII.

But other witnesses are nigh,
Who mock at fear, and death defy!
Soon as the dire lament was played,
It waked the lurking ambuscade.
The Island Lord looked forth, and spied
The cause, and loud in fury cried,
"By Heaven they lead the page to die,
And mock me in his agony!
They shall abye* it!"—On his arm
Bruce laid strong grasp, "They shall not harm

* Feel the effects of.

A ringlet of the stripling's hair;
But, till I give the word, forbear.
—Douglas, lead fifty of our force
Up yonder hollow water-course,
And couch thee midway on the wold,
Between the flyers and their Hold;
A spear above the copse displayed,
Be signal of the ambush made.
—Edward, with forty spearmen, straight
Through yonder copse approach the gate,
And, when thou hear'st the battle din,
Rush forward, and the passage win,
Secure the drawbridge—storm the port—
And man and guard the castle-court.—
The rest move slowly forth with me,
In shelter of the forest tree,
Till Douglas at his post I see."—

XXVIII.

Like war-horse eager to rush on,
Compelled to wait the signal blown,
Hid, and scarce hid, by green-wood bough,
Trembling with rage, stands Ronald now,
And in his grasp his sword gleams blue,
Soon to be dyed with deadlier hue.—
Meanwhile the Bruce, with steady eye,
Sees the dark death-train moving by,
And heedful measures oft the space,
The Douglas and his band must trace,[1]
Ere they can reach their destined ground.
Now sinks the dirge's wailing sound,
Now cluster round the direful tree
That slow and solemn company,
While hymn mistuned and muttered prayer
The victim for his fate prepare.—
What glances o'er the green-wood shade?—
The spear that marks the ambuscade!—
"Now, noble Chief! I leave thee loose;
Upon them, Ronald!" said the Bruce.

XXIX.

"The Bruce, the Bruce!" to well-known cry
His native rocks and woods reply.
"The Bruce, the Bruce!" in that dread word
The knell of hundred deaths was heard.
The astonished Southern gazed at first,
Where the wild tempest was to burst,
That waked in that presaging name.
Before, behind, around it came!
Half-armed, surprised, on every side
Hemmed in, hewed down, they bled and died.
Deep in the ring the Bruce engaged,
And fierce Clan-Colla's broadsword raged!

Full soon the few who fought were sped,
Nor better was their lot who fled,
And met, 'mid terror's wild career,
The Douglas's redoubted spear!
Two hundred yeomen on that morn
The castle left, and none return.

XXX.

Not on their flight pressed Ronald's brand,
A gentler duty claimed his hand.
He raised the page, where on the plain
His fear had sunk him with the slain:
And twice, that morn, surprise well near
Betrayed the secret kept by fear.
Once, when, with life returning, came
To the boy's lip Lord Ronald's name,
And hardly recollection drowned
The accents in a murmuring sound;
And once, when scarce he could resist
The Chieftain's care to loose the vest,
Drawn tightly o'er his labouring breast.
But then the Bruce's bugle blew,
For martial work was yet to do.

XXXI.

A harder task fierce Edward waits.
Ere signal given, the castle gates
His fury had assailed;
Such was his wonted reckless mood,
Yet desperate valour oft made good,
Even by its daring, venture rude,
Where prudence might have failed.
Upon the bridge his strength he threw,
And struck the iron chain in two
By which its planks arose;
The warder next his axe's edge
Struck down upon the threshold ledge,
'Twixt door and post a ghastly wedge!
The gate they may not close.
Well fought the Southern in the fray,
Clifford and Lorn fought well that day,
But stubborn Edward forced his way
Against a hundred foes.
Loud came the cry, "The Bruce, the Bruce!"
No hope or in defence or truce,
Fresh combatants pour in;
Mad with success, and drunk with gore,
They drive the struggling foe before,
And ward on ward they win.
Unsparing was the vengeful sword,
And limbs were lopped and life-blood poured,
The cry of death and conflict roared,
And fearful was the din!

The startling horses plunged and flung,
Clamoured the dogs till turrets rung,
Nor sunk the fearful cry,
Till not a foeman was there found
Alive, save those who on the ground
Groaned in their agony!

XXXII.

The valiant Clifford is no more;
On Ronald's broadsword streamed his gore;
But better hap had he of Lorn,
Who, by the foemen backward borne,
Yet gained with slender train the port,
Where lay his bark beneath the fort,
And cut the cable loose.
Short were his shrift in that debate,
That hour of fury and of fate,
If Lorn encountered Bruce!
Then long and loud the victor shout
From turret and from tower rung out,
The rugged vaults replied;
And from the donjon tower on high,
The men of Carrick may descry
Saint Andrew's cross, in blazonry
Of silver, waving wide!

XXXIII.

The Bruce hath won his father's hall!*
—"Welcome brave friends and comrades all,
Welcome to mirth and joy!
The first, the last, is welcome here,
From lord and chieftain, prince and peer,
To this poor speechless boy.
Great God! once more my sire's abode
Is mine—behold the floor I trode
In tottering infancy!
And there the vaulted arch, whose sound
Echoed my joyous shout and bound
In boyhood, and that rung around
To youth's unthinking glee!

* I have followed the flattering and pleasing tradition, that Bruce, after his descent upon the coast of Ayrshire, actually gained possession of his maternal castle. But the tradition is not accurate. The fact is, that he was only strong enough to alarm and drive in the outposts of the English garrison, then commanded, not by Clifford, as assumed in the text, but by Percy. Neither was Clifford slain upon this occasion, though he had several skirmishes with Bruce. He fell afterwards in the battle of Bannockburn. Bruce, after alarming the castle of Turnberry, and surprising some part of the garrison, who were quartered without the walls of the fortress, retreated into the mountainous part of Carrick, and there made himself so strong, that the English were obliged to evacuate Turnberry, and at length the castle of Ayr. Many of his benefactions and royal gifts attest his attachment to the hereditary followers of his house, in this part of the country.

O first, to thee, all-gracious Heaven,
Then to my friends, my thanks be given!"—
He paused a space, his brow he crossed—
Then on the board his sword he tossed,
Yet steaming hot; with Southern gore
From hilt to point 'twas crimsoned o'er.

XXXIV.

"Bring here," he said, "the mazers four,
My noble fathers loved of yore.*
Thrice let them circle round the board,
The pledge, fair Scotland's rights restored!
And he whose lips shall touch the wine,
Without a vow as true as mine,
To hold both lands and life at nought,
Until her freedom shall be bought,—
Be brand of a disloyal Scot,
And lasting infamy his lot!
Sit, gentle friends! our hour of glee
Is brief, we'll spend it joyously!
Blithest of all the sun's bright beams,
When betwixt storm and storm he gleams.
Well is our country's work begun,
But more, far more, must yet be done!—
Speed messengers the country through;
Arouse old friends, and gather new;
Warn Lanark's knights to gird their mail,
Rouse the brave sons of Teviotdale,
Let Ettricke's† archers sharp their darts,
The fairest forms, the truest hearts!
Call all, call all! from Reedswair-path,
To the wild confines of Cape Wrath;
Wide let the news through Scotland ring,
The Northern Eagle claps his wing!"—

* These mazers were large drinking-cups, or goblets.

† The forest of Selkirk, or Ettricke, at this period occupied all the district which retains that denomination, and embraced the neighbouring dales of Tweeddale, and at least the upper ward of Clydesdale. All that tract was probably as waste as it is mountainous, and covered with the remains of the ancient Caledonian forest, which is supposed to have stretched from the Cheviot Hills as far as Hamilton, and to have comprehended even a part of Ayrshire. At the fatal battle of Falkirk, Sir John Stewart of Bonkill, brother to the steward of Scotland, commanded the archers of Selkirk forest, who fell around the dead body of their leader.

CANTO SIXTH.

I.

O WHO, that shared them, ever shall forget
The emotions of the spirit-rousing time,
When breathless in the mart the couriers met,
Early and late, at evening and at prime;
When the loud cannon and the merry chime
Hailed news on news, as field on field was won,
When Hope, long doubtful, soared at length sublime,
And our glad eyes, awake as day begun,
Watched Joy's broad banner rise, to meet the rising sun!

O these were hours, when thrilling joy repaid
A long, long course of darkness, doubts and fears!
The heart-sick faintness of the hope delayed,
The waste, the woe, the bloodshed, and the tears,
That tracked with terror twenty rolling years,
All was forgot in that blithe jubilee!
Her down-cast eye even pale Affliction rears,
To sigh a thankful prayer, amid the glee,
That hailed the Despot's fall, and peace and liberty!

Such news o'er Scotland's hills triumphant rode,
When 'gainst the invaders turned the battle's scale,
When Bruce's banner had victorious flowed
O'er Loudoun's mountain, and in Ury's vale;*
When English blood oft deluged Douglas-dale,
And fiery Edward routed stout St. John,
When Randolph's† war-cry swelled the southern gale,
And many a fortress, town, and tower was won,
And Fame still sounded forth fresh deeds of glory done.

II.

Blithe tidings flew from Baron's tower,
To peasant's cot, to forest-bower,

* The first important advantage gained by Bruce, after landing at Turnberry, was over Aymer de Valence, earl of Pembroke, the same by whom he had been defeated near Methven. They met, as has been said, by appointment, at Loudoun-hill, in the west of Scotland. Pembroke sustained a defeat, and from that time Bruce was at the head of a considerable flying army. Yet he was subsequently obliged to retreat into Aberdeenshire, and was there assailed by Comyn, earl of Buchan, desirous to avenge the death of his relative, the Red Comyn, and supported by a body of English troops under Philip de Moubray. Bruce was ill at the time of a scrofulous disorder, but took horse to meet his enemies, although obliged to be supported on either side. He was victorious, and it is said that the agitation of his spirits restored his health.

† Thomas Randolph, son of Bruce's sister, a renowned Scottish chief, was in the early part of his life not more remarkable for consistency than Bruce himself.

And waked the solitary cell,
Where lone Saint Bride's recluses dwell.
Princess no more, fair Isabel,
A votaress of the order now,
Say, did the rule that bid thee wear
Dim veil and woollen scapulare,
And reft thy locks of dark-brown hair,
That stern and rigid vow,
Did it condemn the transport high,
Which glistened in thy watery eye,
When minstrel or when palmer told
Each fresh exploit of Bruce the Bold?—
And whose the lovely form, that shares
Thy anxious hopes, thy fears, thy prayers?
No sister she of convent shade;
So say these locks in lengthened braid,
So say the blushes and the sighs,
The tremors that unbidden rise,
When, mingled with the Bruce's fame,
The brave Lord Ronald's praises came.

III.

Believe, his father's castle won,
And his bold enterprise begun,
That Bruce's earliest cares restore
The speechless page to Arran's shore;
Nor think that long the quaint disguise
Concealed her from a sister's eyes;
And sister-like in love they dwell
In that lone convent's silent cell.
There Bruce's slow assent allows
Fair Isabel the veil and vows;
And there, her sex's dress regained,
The lovely Maid of Lorn remained,
Unnamed, unknown, while Scotland far
Resounded with the din of war;
And many a month, and many a day,
In calm seclusion wore away.

IV.

These days, these months, to years had worn,
When tidings of high weight were borne
To that lone island's shore;—
Of all the Scottish conquests made
By the first Edward's ruthless blade,
His son retained no more,
Northward of Tweed, but Stirling's towers,
Beleaguered by King Robert's powers;
And they took term of truce,
If England's King should not relieve
The siege ere John the Baptist's eve,
To yield them to the Bruce.

England was roused—on every side
Courier and post and herald hied,
To summon prince and peer,
At Berwick-bounds to meet their Liege,
Prepared to raise fair Stirling's siege,
With buckler, brand, and spear.
The term was nigh—they mustered fast,
By beacon and by bugle-blast
Forth marshalled for the field;
There rode each knight of noble name,
There England's hardy archers came,
The land they trode seemed all on flame,
With banner, blade, and shield!
And not famed England's powers alone,
Renowned in arms, the summons own;
For Neustria's knights obeyed,
Gascogne hath lent her horsemen good,
And Cambria,* but of late subdued,
Sent forth her mountain-multitude,
And Connoght poured from waste and wood
Her hundred tribes, whose sceptre rude
Dark Eth O'Connor swayed.

V.

Right to devoted Caledon
The storm of war rolls slowly on,
With menace deep and dread;
So the dark clouds, with gathering power,
Suspend a while the threatened shower,
Till every peak and summit lower
Round the pale pilgrim's head.
Not with such pilgrim's startled eye
King Robert marked the tempest nigh!
Resolved the brunt to bide,
His royal summons warned the land,
That all who owned their King's command
Should instant take the spear and brand,
To combat at his side.

*Edward I., with the usual policy of a conqueror, employed the Welsh, whom he had subdued, to assist him in his Scottish wars, for which their habits, as mountaineers, particularly fitted them. But this policy was not without its risks. Previous to the battle of Falkirk, the Welsh quarrelled with the English men-at-arms, and after bloodshed on both parts, separated themselves from his army, and the feud between them, at so dangerous and critical a juncture, was reconciled with difficulty. Edward II. followed his father's example in this particular, and with no better success. They could not be brought to exert themselves in the cause of their conquerors. But they had an indifferent reward for their forbearance. Without arms, and clad only in scanty dresses of linen cloth, they appeared naked in the eyes even of the Scottish peasantry; and after the rout of Bannockburn, were massacred by them in great numbers, as they retired in confusion towards their own country. They were under command of Sir Maurice de Berkley.

O who may tell the sons of fame,
That at King Robert's bidding came,
To battle for the right!
From Cheviot to the shores of Ross,
From Solway-Sands to Marshal's-Moss,
All bouned them for the fight.
Such news the royal courier tells,
Who came to rouse dark Arran's dells;
But farther tidings must the ear
Of Isabel in secret hear.
These in her cloister walk, next morn,
Thus shared she with the Maid of Lorn.

VI.

"My Edith, can I tell how dear
Our intercourse of hearts sincere
Hath been to Isabel?—
Judge then the sorrow of my heart,
When I must say the words, We part!
The cheerless convent-cell
Was not, sweet maiden, made for thee;
Go thou where thy vocation free
On happier fortunes fell.
Nor, Edith, judge thyself betrayed,
Though Robert knows that Lorn's high Maid
And his poor silent page were one.
Versed in the fickle heart of man,
Earnest and anxious hath he looked,
How Ronald's heart the message brooked,
That gave him, with her last farewell,
The charge of Sister Isabel,
To think upon thy better right,
And keep the faith his promise plight.
Forgive him, for thy sister's sake,
At first if vain repinings wake—
Long since that mood is gone:
Now dwells he on thy juster claims,
And oft his breach of faith he blames—
Forgive him for thine own!"—

VII.

"No! never to Lord Ronald's bower
Will I again as paramour"—
"Nay, hush thee, too impatient maid,
Until my final tale be said!—
The good King Robert would engage
Edith once more his elfin page,
By her own heart, and her own eye,
Her lover's penitence to try—
Safe in his royal charge, and free,
Should such thy final purpose be,
Again unknown to seek the cell,
And live and die with Isabel."—

Thus spoke the maid—King Robert's eye
Might have some glance of policy;
Dunstaffnage had the monarch ta'en,
And Lorn had owned King Robert's reign;
Her brother had to England fled,
And there in banishment was dead;
Ample, through exile, death, and flight,
O'er tower and land was Edith's right;
This ample right o'er tower and land
Were safe in Ronald's faithful hand.

VIII.

Embarrassed eye and blushing cheek
Pleasure, and shame, and fear bespeak!
Yet much the reasoning Edith made;
"Her sister's faith she must upbraid,
Who gave such secret, dark and dear,
In council to another's ear.
Why should she leave the peaceful cell?—
How should she part with Isabel?—
How wear that strange attire agen?—
How risk herself 'midst martial men?—
And how be guarded on the way?—
At least she might entreat delay."—
Kind Isabel, with secret smile,
Saw and forgave the maiden's wile,
Reluctant to be thought to move
At the first call of truant love.

IX.

Oh, blame her not!—when zephyrs wake,
The aspen's trembling leaves must shake;
When beams the sun through April's shower,
It needs must bloom, the violet flower;
And Love, howe'er the maiden strive,
Must with reviving hope revive!
A thousand soft excuses came,
To plead his cause 'gainst virgin shame.
Pledged by their sires in earliest youth,
He had her plighted faith and truth—
Then, 'twas her Liege's strict command,
And she, beneath his royal hand,
A ward in person and in land:—
And, last, she was resolved to stay
Only brief space—one little day—
Close hidden in her safe disguise
From all, but most from Ronald's eyes—
But once to see him more!—nor blame
Her wish—to hear him name her name!—
Then, to bear back to solitude
The thought, he had his falsehood rued!
But Isabel, who long had seen
Her pallid cheek and pensive mien,

And well herself the cause might know,
Though innocent, of Edith's woe,
Joyed, generous, that revolving time
Gave means to expiate the crime.
High glowed her bosom as she said,
"Well shall her sufferings be repaid!"—
Now came the parting hour—a band
From Arran's mountains left the land;
Their chief, Fitz-Louis,* had the care
The speechless Amadine to bear
To Bruce, with honour, as behoved
To page the monarch dearly loved.

X.

The King had deemed the maiden bright
Should reach him long before the fight,
But storms and fate her course delay:
It was on eve of battle-day,
When o'er the Gillie's-hill she rode.
The landscape like a furnace glowed,
And far as e'er the eye was borne,
The lances waved like autumn-corn.
In battles four beneath their eye,
The forces of King Robert lie.†
And one below the hill was laid,
Reserved for rescue and for aid;
And three, advanced, formed vaward-line,
'Twixt Bannock's brook and Ninian's shrine.
Detached was each, yet each so nigh
As well might mutual aid supply.
Beyond, the Southern host appears,
A boundless wilderness of spears,
Whose verge or rear the anxious eye
Strove far, but strove in vain, to spy.
Thick flashing in the evening beam,
Glaives, lances, bills, and banners gleam;
And where the heaven joined with the hill,
Was distant armour flashing still,
So wide, so far, the boundless host
Seemed in the blue horizon lost.

*Fitz-Louis, or Mac-Louis, otherwise called Fullarton, is a family of ancient descent in the Isle of Arran. They are said to be of French origin, as the name intimates. They attached themselves to Bruce upon his first landing; and Fergus Mac-Louis, or Fullarton, received from the grateful monarch a charter, dated 26th November, in the second year of his reign (1307), for the lands of Kilmichel, and others, which still remain in this very ancient and respectable family.

†The arrangements adopted by King Robert for the decisive battle of Bannockburn are given very distinctly by Barbour, and form an edifying lesson to tacticians. Yet, till commented upon by Lord Hailes, this important passage of history was generally and strangely misunderstood by historians.

XI.

Down from the hill the maiden passed,
At the wild show of war aghast;
And traversed first the rearward host,
Reserved for aid where needed most.
The men of Carrick and of Ayr,
Lennox and Lanark too, were there,
And all the western land;
With these the valiant of the Isles*
Beneath their chieftains ranked their files,
In many a plaided band.
There, in the centre, proudly raised,
The Bruce's royal standard blazed!
And there Lord Ronald's banner bore
A galley driven by sail and oar.
A wild, yet pleasing contrast, made
Warriors in mail and plate arrayed,
With the plumed bonnet and the plaid
By these Hebrideans worn;
But O! unseen for three long years,
Dear was the garb of mountaineers
To the fair Maid of Lorn!
For one she looked—but he was far
Busied amid the ranks of war—
Yet with affection's troubled eye,
She marked his banner boldly fly,
Gave on the countless foe a glance,
And thought on battle's desperate chance.

XII.

To centre of the vaward line
Fitz-Louis guided Amadine.
Armed all on foot, that host appears
A serried mass of glimmering spears.
There stood the Marchers' warlike band,
The warriors there of Lodon's land;
Ettricke and Liddel bent the yew,
A band of archers fierce, though few;
The men of Nith and Annan's vale,
And the bold Spears of Teviotdale;—
The dauntless Douglas these obey,
And the young Stuart's gentle sway.
North-eastward by Saint Ninian's shrine,
Beneath fierce Randolph's charge, combine
The warriors whom the hardy North
From Tay to Sutherland sent forth.
The rest of Scotland's war-array
With Edward Bruce to westward lay,

* The men of Argyle, the islanders, and the Highlanders in general, were ranked in the rear. They must have been numerous, for Bruce had reconciled himself with almost all their chieftains, excepting the obnoxious Mac-Dougals of Lorn.

Where Bannock, with his broken bank
And deep ravine, protects their flank.
Behind them, screened by sheltering wood,
The gallant Keith, Lord Marshal, stood:
His men-at-arms bear mace and lance,
And plumes that wave, and helms that glance.
Thus fair divided by the King,
Centre, and right, and left-ward wing,
Composed his front; nor distant far
Was strong reserve to aid the war.
And 'twas to front of this array,
Her guide and Edith made their way.

XIII.

Here must they pause; for, in advance
As far as one might pitch a lance,
The Monarch* rode along the van,
The foe's approaching force to scan,
His line to marshal and to range,
And ranks to square, and fronts to change.
Alone he rode—from head to heel
Sheathed in his ready arms of steel;
Nor mounted yet on war-horse wight,
But, till more near the shock of fight,
Reining a palfrey low and light.
A diadem of gold was set
Above his bright steel basinet,
And clasped within its glittering twine
Was seen the glove of Argentine;
Truncheon or leading staff he lacks,
Bearing, instead, a battle-axe.
He ranged his soldiers for the fight,
Accoutred thus, in open sight
Of either host.—Three bowshots far,
Paused the deep front of England's war,
And rested on their arms a while,
To close and rank their warlike file,
And hold high council, if that night
Should view the strife, or dawning light.

XIV.

O gay, yet fearful to behold,
Flashing with steel and rough with gold,
And bristled o'er with bills and spears,
With plumes and pennons waving fair,
Was that bright battle-front! for there
Rode England's King and peers:

* The English vanguard, commanded by the earls of Gloucester and Hereford, came in sight of the Scottish army upon the evening of the 23rd of June. Bruce was then riding upon a little palfrey, in front of his foremost line, putting his host in order. It was then that the personal encounter took place betwixt him and Sir Henry de Bohun, a gallant English knight, the issue of which had a great effect upon the spirits of both armies.

And who, that saw that monarch ride,
His kingdom battled by his side,
Could then his direful doom foretell!—
Fair was his seat in knightly selle,
And in his sprightly eye was set
Some spark of the Plantagenet.
Though light and wandering was his glance,
It flashed at sight of shield and lance.
"Know'st thou," he said, "De Argentine,
Yon knight who marshals thus their line?"—
"The tokens on his helmet tell
The Bruce, my Liege: I know him well."—
"And shall the audacious traitor brave
The presence where our banners wave?"—
"So please my Liege," said Argentine,
"Were he but horsed on steed like mine,
To give him fair and knightly chance,
I would adventure forth my lance."—
"In battle-day," the King replied,
"Nice tourney rules are set aside.
—Still must the rebel dare our wrath?
Set on him—sweep him from our path!"—
And, at King Edward's signal, soon
Dashed from the ranks Sir Henry Boune.

XV.

Of Hereford's high blood he came,
A race renowned for knightly fame.
He burned before his Monarch's eye
To do some deed of chivalry.
He spurred his steed, he couched his lance,
And darted on the Bruce at once.
—As motionless as rocks, that bide
The wrath of the advancing tide,
The Bruce stood fast.—Each breast beat high,
And dazzled was each gazing eye—
The heart had hardly time to think,
The eyelid scarce had time to wink,
While on the King, like flash of flame,
Spurred to full speed the war-horse came!
The partridge may the falcon mock,
If that slight palfrey stand the shock—
But, swerving from the Knight's career,
Just as they met, Bruce shunned the spear.
Onward the baffled warrior bore
His course—but soon his course was o'er!—
High in his stirrups stood the King,
And gave his battle-axe the swing.
Right on De Boune, the whiles he passed,
Fell that stern dint—the first—the last!—
Such strength upon the blow was put,
The helmet crashed like hazel-nut;

The axe-shaft, with its brazen clasp,
Was shivered to the gauntlet grasp.
Springs from the blow the startled horse,
Drops to the plain the lifeless corse;
—First of that fatal field, how soon,
How sudden, fell the fierce De Boune!

XVI.

One pitying glance the Monarch sped,
Where on the field his foe lay dead;
Then gently turned his palfrey's head,
And, pacing back his sober way,
Slowly he gained his own array.
There round their King the leaders crowd,
And blame his recklessness aloud,
That risked 'gainst each adventurous spear
A life so valued and so dear.
His broken weapon's shaft surveyed
The King, and careless answer made,—
"My loss may pay my folly's tax;
I've broke my trusty battle-axe."—
'Twas then Fitz-Louis, bending low,
Did Isabel's commission show;
Edith, disguised, at distance stands,
And hides her blushes with her hands.
The monarch's brow has changed its hue
Away the gory axe he threw,
While to the seeming page he drew,
Clearing war's terrors from his eye,
Her hand with gentle ease he took,
With such a kind protecting look,
As to a weak and timid boy
Might speak, that elder brother's care
And elder brother's love were there.

XVII.

"Fear not," he said, "young Amadine!"
Then whispered, "Still that name be thine.
Fate plays her wonted fantasy,
Kind Amadine, with thee and me,
And sends thee here in doubtful hour.
But soon we are beyond her power;
For on this chosen battle-plain,
Victor or vanquished, I remain.
Do thou to yonder hill repair;
The followers of our host are there,
And all who may not weapons bear.—
Fitz-Louis, have him in thy care.—
Joyful we meet, if all go well;
If not, in Arran's holy cell
Thou must take part with Isabel;
For brave Lord Ronald, too, hath sworn
Not to regain the Maid of Lorn,

(The bliss on earth he covets most,)
Would he forsake his battle-post,
Or shun the fortune that may fall
To Bruce, to Scotland, and to all.—
But hark! some news these trumpets tell;
Forgive my haste—farewell—farewell."
And in a lower voice he said,
"Be of good cheer—farewell, sweet maid!"—

XVIII.

"What train of dust, with trumpet-sound
And glimmering spears,* is wheeling round
Our leftward flank?"—the Monarch cried,
To Moray's Earl, who rode beside:
"Lo! round thy station pass the foes!
Randolph, thy wreath has lost a rose."—
The Earl his visor closed, and said,
"My wreath shall bloom, or life shall fade.—
Follow, my household!"—And they go
Like lightning on the advancing foe.
"My Liege," said noble Douglas then,
"Earl Randolph has but one to ten:
Let me go forth his band to aid!"—
—"Stir not. The error he hath made
Let him amend it as he may;
I will not weaken mine array."—
Then loudly rose the conflict-cry,
And Douglas's brave heart swelled high.—
"My Liege," he said, "with patient ear
I must not Moray's death-knell hear!"—
"Then go, but speed thee back again."—
Forth sprung the Douglas with his train;
But, when they won a rising hill,
He bade his followers hold them still.—
"See, see! the routed Southern fly!
The Earl hath won the victory.
Lo! where yon steeds run masterless,
His banner towers above the press.
Rein up; our presence would impair
The fame we come too late to share."—
Back to the host the Douglas rode,
And soon glad tidings are abroad,
That, Dayncourt, by stout Randolph slain,
His followers fled with loosened rein.—
That skirmish closed the busy day,
And couched in battle's prompt array.
Each army on their weapons lay.

* While the van of the English army advanced, a detached body attempted to relieve Stirling. Lord Hailes gives an account of the manœuvre and the result.

XIX.

It was a night of lovely June,
High rode in cloudless blue the moon,
Demayet smiled beneath her ray;
Old Stirling's towers arose in light,
And twined in links of silver bright,
Her winding river lay.
Ah, gentle planet! other sight
Shall greet thee next returning night,
Of broken arms and banners tore,
And marshes dark with human gore,
And piles of slaughtered men and horse,
And Forth that floats the frequent corse,
And many a wounded wretch to plain
Beneath thy silver light in vain!
But now, from England's host, the cry
Thou hear'st of wassail revelry,
While from the Scottish legions pass
The murmured prayer, the early mass!—
Here, numbers had presumption given;
There, bands o'ermatched sought aid from Heaven.

XX.

On Gillie's-hill, whose height commands
The battle-field, fair Edith stands,
With serf and page unfit for war,
To eye the conflict from afar.
O! with what doubtful agony
She sees the dawning tint the sky!—
Now on the Ochils gleams the sun,
And glistens now Demayet dun;
Is it the lark that carols shrill,
Is it the bittern's early hum?
No!—distant, but increasing still,
The trumpet's sound swells up the hill,
With the deep murmur of the drum,
Responsive from the Scottish host,
Pipe-clang and bugle-sound* were tossed,
His breast and brow each soldier crossed,
And started from the ground;

*There is an old tradition, that the well-known Scottish tune of "Hey, tutti taitti," was Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn. The late Mr. Ritson, no granter of propositions, doubts whether the Scots had any martial music, quotes Froissart's account of each soldier in the host bearing a little horn, on which, at the onset, they would make such a horrible noise, as if all the devils of hell had been among them. He observes, that these horns are the only music mentioned by Barbour, and concludes, that it must remain a moot point whether Bruce's army were cheered by the sound even of a solitary bagpipe.—*Historical Essay, prefixed to Ritson's Scottish Songs.* But the tradition, true or false, has been the means of securing to Scotland one of the finest lyrics in the language, the celebrated war-song of Bruce,—

"Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled."

Armed and arrayed for instant fight,
Rose archer, spearman, squire, and knight,
And in the pomp of battle bright
The dread battalia frowned.

XXI.

Now onward, and in open view,
The countless ranks of England drew,
Dark rolling, like the ocean-tide,
When the rough west hath chafed his pride
And his deep roar sends challenge wide
To all that bars his way!
In front the gallant archers trode,
The men-at-arms behind them rode,
And midmost of the phalanx broad
The Monarch held his sway.
Beside him many a war-horse fumes,
Around him waves a sea of plumes,
Where many a knight in battle known,
And some who spurs had first braced on,
And deemed that fight should see them won,
King Edward's hests obey.
De Argentine attends his side,
With stout De Valence, Pembroke's pride,
Selected champions from the train,
To wait upon his bridle-rein.
Upon the Scottish foe he gazed—
—At once, before his sight amazed,
Sunk banner, spear, and shield;
Each weapon-point is downward sent,
Each warrior to the ground is bent.
"The rebels, Argentine, repent!
For pardon they have kneeled."—
"Aye!—but they bend to other powers,
And other pardon sue than ours!
See where yon bare-foot Abbot stands,
And blesses them with lifted hands!*
Upon the spot where they have kneeled,
These men will die, or win the field."—
—"Then prove we if they die or win!
Bid Gloster's Earl the fight begin."—

XXII.

Earl Gilbert waved his truncheon high,
Just as the Northern ranks arose,

* "Maurice, abbot of Inchaffray, placing himself on an eminence, celebrated mass in sight of the Scottish army. He then passed along the front, bare-footed, and bearing a crucifix in his hands, and exhorting the Scots, in few and forcible words, to combat for their rights and their liberty. The Scots kneeled down. "They yield," cried Edward; "see, they implore mercy." "They do," answered Ingelram de Umfraville, "but not ours. On that field they will be victorious, or die."—*Annals of Scotland*, vol. ii. p. 47.

Signal for England's archery
To halt and bend their bows.
Then stepped each yeoman forth a pace,
Glanced at the intervening space,
And raised his left hand high;
To the right ear the cords they bring—
—At once ten thousand bowstrings ring,
Ten thousand arrows fly!
Nor paused on the devoted Scot
The ceaseless fury of their shot;
As fiercely and as fast,
Forth whistling came the grey-goose wing,
As the wild hailstones pelt and ring
Adown December's blast.
Nor mountain targe of tough bull-hide,
Nor Lowland mail, that storm may bide;
Woe, woe to Scotland's bannered pride,
If the fell shower may last!
Upon the right, behind the wood,
Each by his steed dismounted, stood
The Scottish chivalry;—
With foot in stirrup, hand on mane,
Fierce Edward Bruce can scarce restrain
His own keen heart, his eager train,
Until the archers gained the plain;
Then, "Mount, ye gallants free!"
He cried; and, vaulting from the ground,
His saddle every horseman found.
On high their glittering crests they toss,
As springs the wild-fire from the moss;
The shield hangs down on every breast,
Each ready lance is in the rest,
And loud shouts Edward Bruce.—
"Forth, Marshal, on the peasant foe!
We'll tame the terrors of their bow,
And cut the bowstring loose!"—

XXIII.

Then spurs were dashed in chargers' flanks,
They rushed among the archer ranks.
No spears were there the shock to let,*
No stakes to turn the charge were set,
And how shall yeoman's armour slight
Stand the long lance and mace of might?
Or what may their short swords avail,
'Gainst barbèd horse and shirt of mail?
Amid their ranks the chargers sprung,
High o'er their heads the weapons swung,
And shriek and groan and vengeful shout
Give note of triumph and of rout!

* Break.

Awhile, with stubborn hardihood,
Their English hearts the strife made good;
Borne down at length on every side,
Compelled to flight, they scatter wide.—
Let stags of Sherwood leap for glee,
And bound the deer of Dallom-Lee!
The broken bows of Bannock's shore
Shall in the green-wood ring no more!
Round Wakefield's merry may-pole now,
The maids may twine the summer bough,
May northward look with longing glance,
For those that wont to lead the dance,
For the blithe archers look in vain!
Broken, dispersed, in flight o'erta'en,
Pierced through, trode down, by thousands slain,
They cumber Bannock's bloody plain.

XXIV.

The King with scorn beheld their flight.
"Are these," he said, "our yeomen wight?
Each braggart churl could boast before,
Twelve Scottish lives his baldric bore!
Fitter to plunder chase or park,
Than make a manly foe their mark.—
Forward, each gentleman and knight!
Let gentle blood show generous might,
And chivalry redeem the fight!"—
To rightward of the wild affray,
The field showed fair and level way;
But, in mid-space, the Bruce's care
Had bored the ground with many a pit,
With turf and brushwood hidden yet,
That formed a ghastly snare.
Rushing, ten thousand horsemen came,
With spears in rest, and hearts on flame,
That panted for the shock!
With blazing crests and banners spread,
And trumpet-clang and clamour dread,
The wide plain thundered to their tread,
As far as Stirling rock.
Down! down! in headlong overthrow,
Horseman and horse, the foremost go,*
Wild floundering on the field!
The first are in destruction's gorge,
Their followers wildly o'er them urge;—
The knightly helm and shield,
The mail, the action and the spear,
Strong hand, high heart, are useless here!

* It is generally alleged by historians that the English men-at-arms fell into the hidden snare which Bruce had prepared for them. Barbour does not mention the circumstance.

Loud from the mass confused the cry
Of dying warriors swells on high,
And steeds that shriek in agony!*
They came like mountain-torrent red,
That thunders o'er its rocky bed;
They broke like that same torrent's wave,
When swallowed by a darksome cave.
Billows on billows burst and boil,
Maintaining still the stern turmoil,
And to their wild and tortured groan
Each adds new terrors of his own!

XXV.

Too strong in courage and in might
Was England yet, to yield the fight.
Her noblest all are here;
Names that to fear were never known,
Bold Norfolk's Earl De Brotherton,
And Oxford's famed De Vere.
There Gloster plied the bloody sword,
And Berkley, Grey, and Hereford,
Bottetourt and Sanzavere,
Ross, Montague, and Mauley, came,
And Courtenay's pride, and Percy's fame—
Names known too well in Scotland's war,
At Falkirk, Methven, and Dunbar,
Blazed broader yet in after years,
At Cressy red and fell Poitiers.
Pembroke with these, and Argentine,
Brought up the rearward battle-line.
With caution o'er the ground they tread,
Slippery with blood and piled with dead,
Till hand to hand in battle set,
The bills with spears and axes met,
And, closing dark on every side,
Raged the full contest far and wide.
Then was the strength of Douglas tried,
Then proved was Randolph's generous pride,
And well did Stewart's actions grace
The sire of Scotland's royal race!
Firmly they kept their ground;
As firmly England onward pressed,
And down went many a noble crest,
And rent was many a valiant breast,
And Slaughter revelled round.

XXVI.

Unflinching foot 'gainst foot was set,
Unceasing blow by blow was met;
The groans of those who fell

* It was my fortune, upon one occasion, to hear a horse, in a moment of agony, utter a thrilling scream, which I still consider the most melancholy sound I ever heard.

Were drowned amid the shriller clang,
That from the blades and harness rang,
And in the battle-yell.
Yet fast they fell, unheard, forgot,
Both Southron fierce and hardy Scot;—
And O! amid that waste of life,
What various motives fired the strife!
The aspiring Noble bled for fame,
The Patriot for his country's claim;
This Knight his youthful strength to prove,
And that to win his lady's love;
Some fought from ruffian thirst of blood,
From habit some, or hardihood.
But ruffian stern, and soldier good,
The noble and the slave,
From various cause the same wild road,
On the same bloody morning, trode,
To that dark inn, the Grave!

XXVII.

The tug of strife to flag begins,
Though neither loses yet nor wins.
High rides the sun, thick rolls the dust,
And feebler speeds the blow and thrust.
Douglas leans on his war-sword now,
And Randolph wipes his bloody brow,
Nor less had toiled each Southern knight,
From morn till mid-day in the fight.
Strong Egremont for air must gasp,
Beauchamp undoes his visor-clasp,
And Montague must quit his spear,
And sinks thy falchion, bold De Vere!
The blows of Berkley fall less fast,
And gallant Pembroke's bugle-blast
Hath lost its lively tone;
Sinks, Argentine, thy battle-word,
And Percy's shout was fainter heard,
"My merry-men fight on!"—

XXVIII.

Bruce, with the pilot's wary eye,
The slackening of the storm could spy.
"One effort more, and Scotland 's free!
Lord of the Isles, my trust in thee
Is firm as Ailsa-rock;
Rush on with Highland sword and targe,
I, with my Carrick spearmen, charge;*
Now, forward to the shock!"—

* When the engagement between the main bodies had lasted some time, Bruce made a decisive movement, by bringing up the Scottish reserve. It is traditionally said, that at this crisis he addressed the Lord of the Isles in a phrase used as a motto by some of his descendants, "My trust is constant in thee."

At once the spears were forward thrown,
Against the sun the broadswords shone;
The pibroch lent its maddening tone,
And loud King Robert's voice was known—
"Carrick, press on—they fail, they fail!
Press on, brave sons of Innisgail,
The foe is fainting fast!
Each strike for parent, child, and wife,
For Scotland, liberty, and life,—
The battle cannot last!"—

XXIX.

The fresh and desperate onsèt bore
The foes three furlongs back and more;
Leaving their noblest in their gore.
Alone, De Argentine
Yet bears on high his red-cross shield,
Gathers the relics of the field,
Renews the ranks where they have reeled,
And still makes good the line.
Brief strife, but fierce, his efforts raise,
A bright but momentary blaze.
Fair Edith heard the Southron shout,
Beheld them turning from the rout,
Heard the wild call their trumpets sent,
In notes 'twixt triumph and lament.
That rallying force, combined anew,
Appeared, in her distracted view,
To hem the isles-men round;
"O God! the combat they renew,
And is no rescue found!
And ye that look thus tamely on,
And see your native land o'erthrown,
O! are your hearts of flesh or stone?"—

XXX.

The multitude that watched afar,
Rejected from the ranks of war,
Had not unmoved beheld the fight,
When strove the Bruce for Scotland's right;
Each heart had caught the patriot spark,
Old man and stripling, priest and clerk,
Bondsman and serf; even female hand
Stretched to the hatchet or the brand;
But, when mute Amadine they heard
Give to their zeal his signal-word,
A frenzy fired the throng;—
"Portents and miracles impeach
Our sloth—the dumb our duties teach—
And he that gives the mute his speech,
Can bid the weak be strong.
To us, as to our lords, are given
A native earth, a promised heaven;

To us, as to our lords, belongs
The vengeance for our nation's wrongs;
The choice, 'twixt death or freedom, warms
Our breasts as theirs—To arms, to arms!"—
To arms they flew,—axe, club, or spear,*—
And mimic ensigns high they rear,
And, like a bannered host afar,
Bear down on England's wearied war.

XXXI.

Already scattered o'er the plain,
Reproof, command, and counsel vain
The rearward squadrons fled amain,
Or made but doubtful stay;—
But when they marked the seeming show
Of fresh and fierce and marshalled foe,
The boldest broke array.
O give their hapless prince his due!
In vain the royal Edward threw†
His person 'mid the spears,
Cried "Fight!" to terror and despair,
Menaced, and wept, and tore his hair,
And cursed their caitiff fears;
Till Pembroke turned his bridle rein,
And forced him from the fatal plain.
With them rode Argentine, until
They gained the summit of the hill,
But quitted there the train:—
"In yonder field a gage I left,—
I must not live of fame bereft;
I needs must turn again.
Speed hence, my Liege, for on your trace
The fiery Douglas takes the chase,
I know his banner well.
God send my Sovereign joy and bliss,
And many a happier field than this!—
Once more, my Liege, farewell."—

* The followers of the Scottish camp observed, from the Gillies' hill in the rear, the impression produced upon the English army by the bringing up of the Scottish reserve, and, prompted by the enthusiasm of the moment, or the desire of plunder, assumed, in a tumultuary manner, such arms as they found nearest, fastened sheets to tent-poles and lances, and showed themselves like a new army advancing to battle.

† Edward II., according to the best authorities, showed, in the fatal field of Bannockburn, personal gallantry not unworthy of his great sire and greater son. He remained on the field till forced away by the earl of Pembroke when all was lost. He then rode to the castle of Stirling, and demanded admittance; but the governor remonstrating upon the imprudence of shutting himself up in that fortress, which must so soon surrender, he assembled around his person five hundred men-at-arms, and, avoiding the field of battle and the victorious army, fled towards Linlithgow, pursued by Douglas with about sixty horse.

XXXII.

Again he faced the battle-field,—
Wildly they fly, are slain or yield.
"Now then," he said, and couched his spear,
"My course is run, the goal is near;
One effort more, one brave career,
Must close this race of mine."
Then in his stirrups rising high,
He shouted loud his battle-cry,
"Saint James for Argentine!"
And, of the bold pursuers, four
The gallant knight from saddle bore;
But not unharmed—a lance's point
Has found his breast-plate s loosened joint,
An axe has razed his crest;
Yet still on Colonsay's fierce lord,
Who pressed the chase with gory sword,
He rode with spear in rest,
And through his bloody tartans bored,
And through his gallant breast.
Nailed to the earth, the mountaineer
Yet writhed him up against the spear,
And swung his broad-sword round!
—Stirrup, steel-boot, and cuish gave way,
Beneath that blow's tremendous sway,
The blood gushed from the wound;
And the grim Lord of Colonsay
Hath turned him on the ground,
And laughed in death-pang, that his blade
The mortal thrust so well repaid.

XXXIII.

Now toiled the Bruce, the battle done,
To use his conquest boldly won;
And gave command for horse and spear
To press the Southron's scattered rear,
Nor let his broken force combine,
—When the war-cry of Argentine
Fell faintly on his ear!
"Save, save his life," he cried, "O save
The kind, the noble, and the brave!"—
The squadrons round free passage gave,
The wounded knight drew near.
He raised his red-cross shield no more,
Helm, cuish, and breastplate streamed with gore,
Yet, as he saw the King advance,
He strove even then to couch his lance—
The effort was in vain!
The spur-stroke failed to rouse the horse;
Wounded and weary, in mid course
He stumbled on the plain.

Then foremost was the generous Bruce
To raise his head, his helm to loose:—
"Lord Earl, the day is thine!
My Sovereign's charge, and adverse fate,
Have made our meeting all too late:
Yet this may Argentine,
As boon from ancient comrade, crave—
A Christian's mass, a soldier's grave."—

XXXIV.

Bruce pressed his dying hand—its grasp
Kindly replied; but, in his clasp,
It stiffened and grew cold—
And, "O farewell!" the victor cried,
"Of chivalry the flower and pride,
The arm in battle bold,
The courteous mien, the noble race,
The stainless faith, the manly face!—
Bid Ninian's convent light their shrine,
For late-wake of De Argentine.
O'er better knight on death-bier laid,
Torch never gleamed nor mass was said!"—

XXXV.

Nor for De Argentine alone,
Through Ninian's church these torches shone,
And rose the death-prayer's awful tone.
That yellow lustre glimmered pale,
On broken plate and bloodied mail,
Rent crest and shattered coronet,
Of Baron, Earl, and Banneret;
And the best names that England knew,
Claimed in the death-prayer dismal due.
Yet mourn not, Land of Fame!
Though ne'er the leopards on thy shield
Retreated from so sad a field,
Since Norman William came.
Oft may thine annals justly boast
Of battles stern by Scotland lost;
Grudge not her victory,
When for her free-born rights she strove;
Rights dear to all who freedom love,
To none so dear as thee!

XXXVI.

Turn we to Bruce, whose curious ear
Must from Fitz-Louis tidings hear;
With him, a hundred voices tell
Of prodigy and miracle,
"For the mute Page had spoke."—
"Page!" said Fitz-Louis, "rather say,
An angel sent from realms of day,
To burst the English yoke.

I saw his plume and bonnet drop,
When hurrying from the mountain top;
A lovely brow, dark locks that wave,
To his bright eyes new lustre gave,
A step as light upon the green,
As if his pinions waved unseen!"—
"Spoke he with none?"—"With none—one word
Burst when he saw the Island Lord,
Returning from the battle field."—
"What answer made the Chief?"—"He kneeled,
Durst not look up, but muttered low,
Some mingled sounds that none might know,
And greeted him 'twixt joy and fear,
As being of superior sphere."—

XXXVII.

Even upon Bannock's bloody plain,
Heaped then with thousands of the slain,
'Mid victor monarch's musings high,
Mirth laughed in good King Robert's eye.
"And bore he such angelic air,
Such noble front, such waving hair?
Hath Ronald kneeled to him?" he said,
"Then must we call the church to aid—
Our will be to the Abbot known,
Ere these strange news are wider blown,
To Cambuskenneth straight he pass,
And deck the church for solemn mass,
To pay, for high deliverance given,
A nation's thanks to gracious Heaven.
Let him array, besides, such state
As should on princes' nuptials wait.
Ourself the cause, through fortune's spite,
That once broke short that spousal rite,
Ourself will grace, with early morn,
The bridal of the Maid of Lorn."

CONCLUSION.

Go forth, my Song, upon thy venturous way;
Go boldly forth; nor yet thy master blame,
Who chose no patron for his humble lay,
And graced thy numbers with no friendly name,
Whose partial zeal might smooth thy path to fame.
There was—and O! how many sorrows crowd
Into these two brief words!—*there was* a claim
By generous friendship given—had fate allowed,
It well had bid thee rank the proudest of the proud!

All angel now—yet little less than all,
While still a pilgrim in our world below!
What 'vails it us that patience to recall,
Which hid its own, to soothe all other woe;
What 'vails to tell, how VIRTUE's purest glow
Shone yet more lovely in a form so fair;—
And, least of all, what 'vails the world should know,
That one poor garland, twined to deck thy hair,
Is hung upon thy hearse, to droop and wither there!

Contributions to Border Minstrelsy.

GLENFINLAS;

OR,

LORD RONALD'S CORONACH.*

(This ballad first appeared in Lewis's *Tales of Wonder.*)

THE simple tradition, upon which the following stanzas are founded, runs thus: While two Highland hunters were passing the night in a solitary *bothy* (a hut built for the purpose of hunting), and making merry over their venison and whisky, one of them expressed a wish, that they had pretty lasses to complete their party. The words were scarcely uttered, when two beautiful young women, habited in green, entered the hut, dancing and singing. One of the hunters was seduced, by the syren who attached herself particularly to him, to leave the hut; the other remained, and, suspicious of the fair seducers, continued to play upon a trump, or Jew's-harp, some strain, consecrated to the Virgin Mary. Day at length came, and the temptress vanished. Searching in the forest, he found the bones of his unfortunate friend, who had been torn to pieces and devoured by the fiend, into whose toils he had fallen. The place was from thence called, *The Glen of the Green Women.*

Glenfinlas is a tract of forest-ground, lying in the Highlands of Perthshire, not far from Callender, in Menteith. It was formerly a royal forest, and now belongs to the Earl of Moray. This country, as well as the adjacent district of Balquidder, was, in times of yore, chiefly inhabited by the Macgregors. To the west of the forest of Glenfinlas lies Loch Katrine, and its romantic avenue, called the Trosachs. Benledi, Benmore, and Benvoirlich, are mountains in the same district, and at no great distance from Glenfinlas. The river Teith passes Callender and the Castle of Doune, and joins the Forth near Stirling. The Pass of Lenny is immediately above Callender, and is the principal access to the Highlands from that town. Glenartney is a forest, near Benvoirlich. The whole forms a sublime tract of Alpine scenery.

* *Coronach* is the lamentation for a deceased warrior, sung by the aged of the clan.

"For them the viewless forms of air obey,
Their bidding heed, and at their beck repair;
They know what spirit brews the stormful day,
And heartless oft, like moody madness, stare,
To see the phantom train their secret work prepare."

"O HONE a rie'! O hone a rie'!"*
The pride of Albin's line is o'er,
And fallen Glenartney's stateliest tree;
We ne'er shall see Lord Ronald more!

O, sprung from great Macgillianore,
The chief that never feared a foe,
How matchless was thy broad claymore,
How deadly thine unerring bow!

Well can the Saxon† widows tell,
How, on the Teith's resounding shore,
The boldest Lowland warriors fell,
As down from Lenny's pass you bore.

But o'er his hills, on festal day,
How blazed Lord Ronald's Beltane‡ tree,
While youths and maids the light strathspey
So nimbly danced, with Highland glee.

Cheered by the strength of Ronald's shell,
E'en age forgot his tresses hoar;
But now the loud lament we swell,
O ne'er to see Lord Ronald more!

From distant isles a Chieftain came,
The joys of Ronald's halls to find,
And chase with him the dark brown game,
That bounds o'er Albin's hills of wind.

'Twas Moy; whom in Columba's isle,
The seer's prophetic spirit found,§
As, with a minstrel's fire the while,
He waked his harp's harmonious sound.

Full many a spell to him was known,
Which wandering spirits shrink to hear;
And many a lay of potent tone,
Was never meant for mortal ear.

For there, 'tis said, in mystic mood,
High converse with the dead they hold,

* *O hone a rie'* signifies—"Alas for the prince, or chief."

† The term Sassenach, or Saxon, is applied by the Highlanders to their Low-country neighbours.

‡ The fires lighted by the Highlanders, on the first of May, in compliance with a custom derived from the Pagan times, are termed *The Beltane-tree.* It is a festival celebrated with various superstitious rites, both in the north of Scotland and in Wales.

§ An allusion to the second-sight.

And oft espy the fated shroud,
That shall the future corpse enfold.

O so it fell, that on a day,
To rouse the red deer from their den,
The chiefs have ta'en their distant way,
And scoured the deep Glenfinlas glen.

No vassals wait their sports to aid,
To watch their safety, deck their board;
Their simple dress, the Highland plaid,
Their trusty guard, the Highland sword.

Three summer days, through brake and dell,
Their whistling shafts successful flew;
And still, when dewy evening fell,
The quarry to their hut they drew.

In grey Glenfinlas' deepest nook
The solitary cabin stood,
Fast by Moneira's sullen brook,
Which murmurs through that lonely wood.

Soft fell the night, the sky was calm,
When three successive days had flown;
And summer mist in dewy balm
Steeped heathy bank, and mossy stone.

The moon, half hid in silvery flakes,
Afar her dubious radiance shed,
Quivering on Katrine's distant lakes,
And resting on Benledi's head.

Now in their hut, in social guise,
Their sylvan fare the chiefs enjoy;
And pleasure laughs in Ronald's eyes,
As many a pledge he quaffs to Moy.—

"What lack we here to crown our bliss,
While thus the pulse of joy beats high?
What, but fair woman's yielding kiss,
Her panting breath, and melting eye?

"To chase the deer of yonder shades,
This morning left their father's pile
The fairest of our mountain maids,
The daughters of the proud Glengyle.

"Long have I sought sweet Mary's heart,
And dropped the tear, and heaved the sigh;
But vain the lover's wily art,
Beneath a sister's watchful eye.

"But thou mayst teach that guardian fair,
While far with Mary I am flown,
Of other hearts to cease her care,
And find it hard to guard her own.

"Touch but thy harp, thou soon shalt see
The lovely Flora of Glengyle,
Unmindful of her charge and me,
Hang on thy notes, 'twixt tear and smile.

"Or, if she choose a melting tale,
All underneath the greenwood bough,
Will good St. Oran's* rule prevail,
Stern huntsman of the rigid brow?"—

"Since Enrick's fight, since Morna's death,
No more on me shall rapture rise,
Responsive to the panting breath,
Or yielding kiss, or melting eyes.

"E'en then, when o'er the heath of woe,
Where sunk my hopes of love and fame,
I bade my harp's wild wailings flow,
On me the Seer's sad spirit came.

"The last dread curse of angry heaven,
With ghastly sights and sounds of woe,
To dash each glimpse of joy, was given—
The gift, the future ill to know.

"The bark thou sawst, yon summer morn,
So gaily part from Oban's bay,
My eye beheld her dashed and torn,
Far on the rocky Colonsay.

Thy Fergus too—thy sister's son,
Thou sawst, with pride, the gallant's power,
As marching 'gainst the Lord of Downe,
He left the skirts of huge Benmore.

"Thou only sawst their tartans† wave,
As down Benvoirlich's side they wound,
Heardst but the pibroch, answering brave
To many a target clanking round.

"I heard the groans, I marked the tears,
I saw the wound his bosom bore,
When on the serried Saxon spears
He poured his clan's resistless roar.

*St. Oran was a friend and follower of St. Columba, and was buried in Icolmkill. His pretensions to be a saint were rather dubious. According to the legend, he consented to be buried alive, in order to propitiate certain demons of the soil, who obstructed the attempts of St. Columba to build a chapel. Columba caused the body of his friend to be dug up, after three days had elapsed; when Oran, to the horror and scandal of the assistants, declared, that there was neither a God, a judgment, nor a future state! He had no time to make further discoveries, for Columba caused the earth once more to be shovelled over him with the utmost despatch. The chapel, however, and the cemetery, was called *Reilig Ouran*; and, in memory of his rigid celibacy, no female was permitted to pay her devotions, or be buried, in that place. This is the rule alluded to in the poem.

†The full Highland dress, made of the checkered stuff so termed.

"And thou, who bidd'st me think of bliss,
And bidd'st my heart awake to glee,
And court, like thee, the wanton kiss,—
That heart, O Ronald, bleeds for thee!

"I see the death-damps chill thy brow;
I hear thy Warning Spirit cry;
The corpse-lights dance—they're gone, and now . . .
No more is given to gifted eye!"—

"Alone enjoy thy dreary dreams,
Sad prophet of the evil hour!
Say, should we scorn joy's transient beams,
Because to-morrow's storm may lour?

"Or false, or sooth, thy words of woe,
Clangillian's chieftain ne'er shall fear;
His blood shall bound at rapture's glow,
Though doomed to stain the Saxon spear.

"E'en now, to meet me in yon dell,
My Mary's buskins brush the dew;"—
He spoke, nor bade the chief farewell,
But called his dogs, and gay withdrew.

Within an hour returned each hound;
In rushed the rousers of the deer;
They howled in melancholy sound,
Then closely couch beside the seer.

No Ronald yet; though midnight came,
And sad were Moy's prophetic dreams,
As, bending o'er the dying flame,
He fed the watch-fire's quivering gleams.

Sudden the hounds erect their ears,
And sudden cease their moaning howl;
Close pressed to Moy, they mark their fears
By shivering limbs, and stifled growl.

Untouched, the harp began to ring,
As softly, slowly, oped the door;
And shook responsive every string,
As light a footstep pressed the floor.

And by the watch-fire's glimmering light,
Close by the minstrel's side was seen
A huntress maid, in beauty bright,
All dropping wet her robes of green.

All dropping wet her garments seem;
Chilled was her cheek, her bosom bare,
As, bending o'er the dying gleam,
She wrung the moisture from her hair.

With maiden blush she softly said,
"O gentle huntsman, hast thou seen,

In deep Glenfinlas' moon-light glade,
A lovely maid in vest of green:

"With her a chief in Highland pride;
His shoulders bear the hunter's bow,
The mountain dirk adorns his side,
Far on the wind his tartans flow?"

"And who art thou? and who are they?"
All ghastly gazing, Moy replied:
"And why, beneath the moon's pale ray,
Dare ye thus roam Glenfinlas' side?"

"Where wild Loch-Katrine pours her tide,
Blue, dark, and deep, round many an isle,
Our father's towers o'erhang her side,
The castle of the bold Glengyle.

"To chase the dun Glenfinlas deer,
Our woodland course this morn we bore,
And haply met, while wandering here,
The son of great Macgillianore.

"O aid me, then, to seek the pair,
Whom, loitering in the woods, I lost;
Alone, I dare not venture there,
Where walks, they say, the shrieking ghost."

"Yes, many a shrieking ghost walks there;
Then first, my own sad vow to keep,
Here will I pour my midnight prayer,
Which still must rise when mortals sleep."

"O first, for pity's gentle sake,
Guide a lone wanderer on her way!
For I must cross the haunted brake,
And reach my father's towers ere day."

"First, three times tell each Ave bead,
And thrice a Pater-noster say;
Then kiss with me the holy reed;
So shall we safely wind our way."

"O shame to knighthood, strange and foul!
Go, doff the bonnet from thy brow,
And shroud thee in the monkish cowl,
Which best befits thy sullen vow.

"Not so, by high Dunlathmon's fire,
Thy heart was froze to love and joy,
When gaily rung thy raptured lyre,
To wanton Morna's melting eye."

Wild stared the Minstrel's eyes of flame,
And high his sable locks arose,
And quick his colour went and came,
As fear and rage alternate rose.

"And thou, when by the blazing oak
I lay, to her and love resigned,
Say, rode ye on the eddying smoke,
Or sailed ye on the midnight wind?

"Not thine a race of mortal blood,
Nor old Glengyle's pretended line;
Thy dame, the Lady of the Flood,
Thy sire, the Monarch of the Mine."

He muttered thrice St. Oran's rhyme,
And thrice St. Fillan's* powerful prayer;
Then turned him to the eastern clime,
And sternly shook his coal-black hair.

And, bending o'er his harp, he flung
His wildest witch-notes on the wind;
And loud, and high, and strange, they rung,
As many a magic change they find.

Tall waxed the Spirit's altering form,
Till to the roof her stature grew;
Then, mingling with the rising storm,
With one wild yell, away she flew.

Rain beats, hail rattles, whirlwinds tear:
The slender hut in fragments flew;
But not a lock of Moy's loose hair
Was waved by wind, or wet by dew.

Wild mingling with the howling gale,
Loud bursts of ghastly laughter rise;
High o'er the minstrel's head they sail,
And die amid the northern skies.

The voice of thunder shook the wood,
As ceased the more than mortal yell;
And, spattering foul, a shower of blood
Upon the hissing firebrands fell.

Next, dropped from high a mangled arm;
The fingers strained a half-drawn blade:
And last, the life-blood streaming warm,
Torn from the trunk, a gasping head.

Oft o'er that head, in battling field,
Streamed the proud crest of high Benmore,

* St. Fillan has given his name to many chapels, holy fountains, &c. in Scotland. He was, according to Camerarius, an abbot of Pittenweem, in Fife; from which situation he retired, and died a hermit in the wilds of Glenurchy, A.D. 649. While engaged in transcribing the Scriptures, his left hand was observed to send forth such a splendour as to afford light to that with which he wrote; a miracle which saved many candles to the convent, as St. Fillan used to spend whole nights in that exercise. The 9th of January was dedicated to this saint, who gave his name to Kilfillan, in Renfrew, and St. Phillans, or Forgend, in Life.

That arm the broad claymore could wield,
Which dyed the Teith with Saxon gore.

Woe to Moneira's sullen rills!
Woe to Glenfinlas' dreary glen!
There never son of Albin's hills
Shall draw the hunter's shaft agen!

E'en the tired pilgrim's burning feet
At noon shall shun that sheltering den,
Lest, journeying in their rage, he meet
The wayward Ladies of the Glen.

And we—behind the chieftain's shield,
No more shall we in safety dwell;
None leads the people to the field—
And we the loud lament must swell.

O hone a rie'! O hone a rie'!
The pride of Albin's line is o'er,
And fallen Glenartney's stateliest tree;
We ne'er shall see Lord Ronald more!

THE EVE OF ST. JOHN.

SMAYLHO'ME, or Smallholm Tower, the scene of the following ballad, is situated on the northern boundary of Roxburghshire, among a cluster of wild rocks, called Sandiknow-Crags. The tower is a high square building, surrounded by an outer wall, now ruinous. The circuit of the outer court, being defended, on three sides, by a precipice and morass, is accessible only from the west, by a steep and rocky path. The apartments, as is usual in a Border keep, or fortress, are placed one above another, and communicate by a narrow stair; on the roof are two bartizans, or platforms, for defence or pleasure. The inner door of the tower is wood, the outer an iron gate; the distance between them being nine feet, the thickness, namely, of the wall. From the elevated situation of Smaylho'me Tower, it is seen many miles in every direction. Among the crags by which it is surrounded, one, more eminent, is called the *Watchfold*, and is said to have been the station of a beacon, in the times of war with England. Without the tower-court is a ruined chapel. Brotherstone is a heath, in the neighbourhood of Smaylho'me Tower.

This ballad was first printed in Mr. LEWIS'S "Tales of Wonder." It is here published, with some additional illustrations, particularly an account of the battle of Ancram Moor; which seemed proper in a work upon Border antiquities. The catastrophe of the tale is founded upon a well-

known Irish tradition. This ancient fortress and its vicinity formed the scene of the Editor's infancy, and seemed to claim from him this attempt to celebrate them in a Border tale.

THE Baron of Smaylho'me rose with day,
He spurred his courser on,
Without stop or stay, down the rocky way
That leads to Brotherstone.

He went not with the bold Buccleuch,
His banner broad to rear;
He went not 'gainst the English yew,
To lift the Scottish spear.

Yet his plate-jack* was braced, and his helmet was laced,
And his vaunt-brace of proof he wore;
At his saddle-gerthe was a good steel sperthe,
Full ten pound weight and more.

The Baron returned in three days' space,
And his looks were sad and sour;
And weary was his courser's pace,
As he reached his rocky tower.

He came not from where Ancram Moor†
Ran red with English blood;
Where the Douglas true, and the bold Buccleuch,
'Gainst keen Lord Evers stood.

*The plate-jack is coat armour; the vaunt-brace, or wam-brace, armour for the body; the sperthe, a battle-axe.

†Lord Evers, and Sir Brian Latoun, during the year 1544, committed the most dreadful ravages upon the Scottish frontiers, compelling most of the inhabitants, and especially the men of Liddesdale, to take assurance under the king of England. Upon the 17th November, in that year, the sum total of their depredations stood thus, in the bloody ledger of Lord Evers:—

Towns, towers, barnekynes, paryshe churches, bastill houses, burned and destroyed	192
Scots slain	403
Prisoners taken	816
Nolt (cattle)	10,386
Shepe	12,492
Nags and geldings	1,296
Gayt	200
Bolls of corn	850

Insight gear, &c. (furniture) an incalculable quantity.

MURDIN'S *State Papers*, vol. i. p. 51.

For these services Sir Ralph Evers was made a lord of parliament. In 1545 they again entered Scotland, and even exceeded their former cruelty. They penetrated as far as Melrose, but on their return towards Jedburgh were followed by Angus, who defeated their army at Ancram Moor, and slew both Evers and Latoun. The spot, on which the battle was fought, is called Lilyard's Edge, from an Amazonian Scottish woman of that name, who is reported, by tradition, to have distinguished herself in the same manner as Squire Witherington. The old people point out her monument, now broken and defaced.

Yet was his helmet hacked and hewed,
His acton pierced and tore;
His axe and his dagger with blood imbrued,—
But it was not English gore.

He lighted at the Chapellage,
He held him close and still;
And he whistled thrice for his little foot-page,
His name was English Will.

"Come thou hither, my little foot-page;
Come hither to my knee;
Thou art young, and tender of age,
I think thou art true to me.

"Come, tell me all that thou hast seen,
And look thou tell me true!
Since I from Smaylho'me tower have been,
What did thy lady do?"

"My lady, each night, sought the lonely light,
That burns on the wild Watchfold;
For, from height to height, the beacons bright
Of the English foemen told.

"The bittern clamoured from the moss,
The wind blew loud and shrill;
Yet the craggy pathway she did cross,
To the eiry Beacon Hill.

"I watched her steps, and silent came
Where she sat her on a stone;
No watchman stood by the dreary flame;
It burnèd all alone.

"The second night I kept her in sight,
Till to the fire she came,
And, by Mary's might! an armèd Knight
Stood by the lonely flame.

"And many a word that warlike lord
Did speak to my lady there;
But the rain fell fast, and loud blew the blast,
And I heard not what they were.

"The third night there the sky was fair,
And the mountain blast was still,
As again I watched the secret pair,
On the lonesome Beacon Hill.

"And I heard her name the midnight hour,
And name this holy eve;
And say, 'Come this night to thy lady's bower;
Ask no bold Baron's leave.

"'He lifts his spear with the bold Buccleuch;
His lady is all alone;

The door she'll undo to her knight so true,
On the eve of good St. John.'

"'I cannot come; I must not come;
I dare not come to thee;
On the eve of St. John I must wander alone:
In thy bower I may not be.'

"'Now, out on thee, faint-hearted knight!
Thou shouldst not say me nay;
For the eve is sweet, and when lovers meet,
Is worth the whole summer's day.

"'And I'll chain the blood-hound, and the warder
shall not sound,
And rushes shall be strewed on the stair;
So, by the black rood-stone,* and by holy St. John,
I conjure thee, my love, to be there!'

"'Though the blood-hound be mute, and the rush
beneath my foot,
And the warder his bugle should not blow,
Yet there sleepeth a priest in the chamber to the east,
And my footstep he would know.'

"'O fear not the priest, who sleepeth to the east!
For to Dryburgh† the way he has ta'en;
And there to say mass, till three days do pass,
For the soul of a knight that is slayne.'

"He turned him around, and grimly he frowned;
Then he laughed right scornfully—
'He who says the mass-rite for the soul of that knight,
May as well say mass for me.

"'At the lone midnight hour, when bad spirits have
power,
In thy chamber will I be.'—
With that he was gone, and my lady left alone,
And no more did I see."—

Then changed, I trow, was that bold Baron's brow,
From the dark to the blood-red high;
"Now, tell me the mien of the knight thou hast seen,
For, by Mary, he shall die!"

"His arms shone full bright, in the beacon's red light;
His plume it was scarlet and blue;
On his shield was a hound, in a silver leash bound,
And his crest was a branch of the yew.

* The black rood of Melrose was a crucifix of black marble, and of superior sanctity.

† Dryburgh Abbey is beautifully situated on the banks of the Tweed. After its dissolution, it became the property of the Halliburtons of Newmains, and is now the seat of the right honourable the earl of Buchan. It belonged to the order of Premonstratenses.

"Thou liest, thou liest, thou little foot-page,
Loud dost thou lie to me!
For that knight is cold, and low laid in the mould,
All under the Eildon-tree."*

"Yet hear but my word, my noble lord!
For I heard her name his name;
And that lady bright, she called the knight,
Sir Richard of Coldinghame."

The bold Baron's brow then changed, I trow,
From high blood-red to pale—
"The grave is deep and dark—and the corpse is stiff and stark—
So I may not trust thy tale.

"Where fair Tweed flows round holy Melrose,
And Eildon slopes to the plain,
Full three nights ago, by some secret foe,
That gay gallant was slain.

"The varying light deceived thy sight,
And the wild winds drowned the name;
For the Dryburgh bells ring, and the white monks do sing,
For Sir Richard of Coldinghame!"

He passed the court-gate, and he oped the tower grate,
And he mounted the narrow stair
To the bartizan-seat, where, with maids that on her wait,
He found his lady fair.

That lady sat in mournful mood;
Looked over hill and vale;
Over Tweed's fair flood, and Mertoun's wood,
And all down Teviotdale.

"Now hail, now hail, thou lady bright!"
"Now hail thou Baron true!
What news, what news, from Ancram fight?
What news from the bold Buccleuch?"

"The Ancram Moor is red with gore,
For many a Southron fell;
And Buccleuch has charged us, evermore
To watch our beacons well."

The lady blushed red, but nothing she said;
Nor added the Baron a word:
Then she stepped down the stair to her chamber fair,
And so did her moody lord.

* Eildon is a high hill, terminating in three conical summits, immediately above the town of Melrose, where are the admired ruins of a magnificent monastery. Eildon-tree is said to be the spot where Thomas the Rhymer uttered his prophecies.

In sleep the lady mourned, and the Baron tossed and
turned,
And oft to himself he said—
"The worms around him creep, and his bloody grave is
deep . . .
It cannot give up the dead!"

It was near the ringing of matin-bell,
The night was well nigh done,
When a heavy sleep on that Baron fell,
On the eve of good St. John.

The lady looked through the chamber fair,
By the light of a dying flame;
And she was aware of a knight stood there—
Sir Richard of Coldinghame!

"Alas! away, away!" she cried,
"For the holy Virgin's sake!"
"Lady I know who sleeps by thy side;
But, lady, he will not awake.

"By Eildon-tree, for long nights three,
In bloody grave have I lain;
The mass and the death-prayer are said for me,
But, lady, they are said in vain.

"By the Baron's brand, near Tweed's fair strand,
Most foully slain I fell;
And my restless sprite on the beacon's height
For a space is doomed to dwell.

"At our trysting-place, for a certain space
I must wander to and fro;
But I had not had power to come to thy bower,
Hadst thou not conjured me so."

Love mastered fear—her brow she crossed;
"How Richard hast thou sped?
And art thou saved, or art thou lost?"
The Vision shook his head!

"Who spilleth life shall forfeit life,
So bid thy Lord believe:
That lawless love is guilt above,
This awful sign receive."

He laid his left palm on an oaken beam;
His right upon her hand:
The lady shrunk, and fainting sunk,
For it scorched like a fiery brand.

The sable score, of fingers four,
Remains on that board impressed;
And for evermore that lady wore
A covering on her wrist.

There is a Nun* in Dryburgh bower,
Ne'er looks upon the sun:
There is a Monk in Melrose tower,
He speaketh word to none.

That Nun, who ne'er beholds the day,
That Monk who speaks to none—
That Nun was Smaylho'me's Lady gay,
That Monk the bold Baron.

CADYOW CASTLE.

ADDRESSED TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LADY ANNE HAMILTON.

THE ruins of Cadyow, or Cadzow Castle, the ancient baronial residence of the family of Hamilton, are situated upon the precipitous banks of the river Evan, about two miles above its junction with the Clyde. The situation of the ruins, embosomed in wood, darkened by ivy and creeping shrubs, and overhanging the brawling torrent, is romantic in the highest degree. In the immediate vicinity of Cadyow is a grove of immense oaks, the remains of the Caledonian Forest, which anciently extended through the south of Scotland, from the Eastern to the Atlantic

* The circumstance of the nun, "who never saw the day," is not entirely imaginary. About fifty years ago, an unfortunate female wanderer took up her residence in a dark vault, among the ruins of Dryburgh Abbey, which, during the day, she never quitted. When night fell, she issued from this miserable habitation, and went to the house of Mr. Halliburton of Newmains, Sir Walter Scott's great-grandfather, or to that of Mr. Erskine of Sheilfield, two gentlemen of the neighbourhood. From their charity she obtained such necessaries as she could be prevailed upon to accept. At twelve, each night, she lighted her candle and returned to her vault, assuring her friendly neighbours that, during her absence, her habitation was arranged by a spirit, to whom she gave the uncouth name of *Fatlips;* describing him as a little man, wearing heavy iron shoes, with which he trampled the clay floor of the vault, to dispel the damps. This circumstance caused her to be regarded, by the well-informed, with compassion, as deranged in her understanding; and by the vulgar, with some degree of terror. The cause of her adopting this extraordinary mode of life she would never explain. It was, however, believed to have been occasioned by a vow that, during the absence of a man to whom she was attached, she would never look upon the sun. Her lover never returned. He fell during the civil war of 1745-6, and she never more would behold the light of day. The vault, or rather dungeon, in which this unfortunate woman lived and died, passes still by the name of the supernatural being with which its gloom was tenanted by her disturbed imagination, and few of the neighbouring peasants dare enter it by night.

Ocean. Some of these trees measure twenty-five feet, and upwards, in circumference; and the state of decay, in which they now appear, shows that they may have witnessed the rites of the Druids. The whole scenery is included in the magnificent and extensive park of the Duke of Hamilton. In this forest was long preserved the breed of the Scottish wild cattle, until their ferocity led to their extirpation, about forty years ago. Their appearance was beautiful, being milk-white, with black muzzles, horns, and hoofs. The bulls are described by ancient authors as having white manes; but those of latter days had lost that peculiarity, perhaps by intermixture with the tame breed.

In detailing the death of the regent Murray, which is made the subject of the following ballad, it would be injustice to my reader to use other words than those of Dr. Robertson, whose account of that memorable event forms a beautiful piece of historical painting.

"Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh was the person who committed this barbarous action. He had been condemned to death soon after the battle of Langside, as we have already related, and owed his life to the regent's clemency. But part of his estate had been bestowed upon one of the regent's favourites, who seized his house, and turned out his wife naked, in a cold night, into the open fields, where, before next morning, she became furiously mad. This injury made a deeper impression on him than the benefit he had received, and from that moment he vowed to be revenged of the regent. Party rage strengthened and inflamed his private resentment. His kinsmen, the Hamiltons, applauded the enterprise. The maxims of that age justified the most desperate course he could take to obtain vengeance. He followed the regent for some time, and watched for an opportunity to strike the blow. He resolved, at last, to wait till his enemy should arrive at Linlithgow, through which he was to pass, in his way from Stirling to Edinburgh. He took his stand in a wooden gallery, which had a window towards the street; spread a feather-bed on the floor, to hinder the noise of his feet from being heard; hung up a black cloth behind him, that his shadow might not be observed from without; and, after all this preparation, calmly expected the regent's approach, who had lodged, during the night, in a house not far distant. Some indistinct information of the danger which threatened him, had been conveyed to the regent, and he paid so much regard to it, that he resolved to return by the same gate through which he had entered, and to fetch a compass round the town. But, as the crowd about the gate was great, and he himself unacquainted with fear, he proceeded directly along the street; and the throng of people obliging him to move very slowly, gave the assassin time to take so true an aim, that he shot him, with a single bullet, through the lower part of his belly, and killed the horse of a gentleman, who rode on his other side. His followers instantly endeavoured to break into the house whence the blow had come; but they found the door strongly barricaded, and, before it could be forced open, Hamilton had mounted a fleet horse, which stood ready for him at a

back passage, and was got far beyond their reach. The regent died the same night of his wound."—*History of Scotland*, book v.

The Regent died on the 23rd of January, 1569. Immediately after the murder Bothwellhaugh rode to Hamilton, where he was received in triumph.

WHEN princely Hamilton's abode
Ennobled Cadyow's Gothic towers,
The song went round, the goblet flowed,
And revel sped the laughing hours.

Then, thrilling to the harp's gay sound,
So sweetly rung each vaulted wall,
And echoed light the dancer's bound,
As mirth and music cheered the hall.

But Cadyow's towers, in ruins laid,
And vaults, by ivy mantled o'er,
Thrill to the music of the shade,
Or echo Evan's hoarser roar.

Yet still, of Cadyow's faded fame,
You bid me tell a minstrel tale,
And tune my harp, of Border frame,
On the wild banks of Evandale.

For thou, from scenes of courtly pride,
From pleasure's lighter scenes, canst turn,
To draw oblivion's pall aside,
And mark the long-forgotten urn.

Then, noble maid! at thy command,
Again the crumbled halls shall rise;
Lo! as on Evan's banks we stand,
The past returns—the present flies.—

Where with the rock's wood-covered side
Were blended late the ruins green,
Rise turrets in fantastic pride,
And feudal banners flaunt between:

Where the rude torrent's brawling course
Was shagged with thorn and tangling sloe,
The ashler buttress braves its force,
And ramparts frown in battled row.

'Tis night—the shade of keep and spire
Obscurely dance on Evan's stream,
And on the wave the warder's fire
Is chequering the moonlight beam.

Fades slow their light; the east is grey;
The weary warder leaves his tower;
Steeds snort; uncoupled stag-hounds bay
And merry hunters quit the bower.

The drawbridge falls—they hurry out—
Clatters each plank and swinging chain,
As, dashing o'er, the jovial rout
Urge the shy steed, and slack the rein.

First of his troop, the chief* rode on;
His shouting merry-men throng behind;
The steed of princely Hamilton
Was fleeter than the mountain wind.

From the thick copse the roebucks bound,
The startling red-deer scuds the plain,
For the hoarse bugle's warrior sound
Has roused their mountain haunts again.

Through the huge oaks of Evandale,
Whose limbs a thousand years have worn,
What sullen roar comes down the gale,
And drowns the hunter's pealing horn?

Mightiest of all the beasts of chace,
That roam in woody Caledon,
Crashing the forest in his race,
The Mountain Bull comes thundering on.

Fierce, on the hunters' quivered band,
He rolls his eyes of swarthy glow,
Spurns, with black hoof and horn, the sand,
And tosses high his mane of snow.

Aimed well, the chieftain's lance has flown;
Struggling in blood the savage lies;
His roar is sunk in hollow groan—
Sound, merry huntsmen! sound the *pryse*!†

'Tis noon—against the knotted oak
The hunters rest the idle spear;
Curls through the trees the slender smoke,
Where yeomen dight the woodland cheer.

Proudly the chieftain marked his clan,
On greenwood lap all careless thrown,
Yet missed his eye the boldest man
That bore the name of Hamilton.

"Why fills not Bothwellhaugh his place,
Still wont our weal and woe to share?
Why comes he not our sport to grace?
Why shares he not our hunter's fare?"

* The head of the family of Hamilton, at this period, was James, earl of Arran, duke of Chatelherault, in France, and the first peer of the Scottish realm. In 1569, he was appointed by Queen Mary her lieutenant-general in Scotland, under the singular title of her adopted father.

† The note blown at the death of the game.

Stern Claud replied,* with darkening face,
(Grey Pasley's haughty lord was he)
"At merry feast, or buxom chase,
No more the warrior shalt thou see.

"Few suns have set, since Woodhouselee†
Saw Bothwellhaugh's bright goblets foam,
When to his hearths, in social glee,
The war-worn soldier turned him home.

"There, wan from her maternal throes
His Margaret, beautiful and mild,
Sate in her bower, a pallid rose,
And peaceful nursed her new-born child.

"O change accursed! past are those days;
False Murray's ruthless spoilers came,
And, for the hearth's domestic blaze,
Ascends destruction's volumed flame.

"What sheeted phantom wanders wild,
Where mountain Eske through woodland flows,
Her arms enfold a shadowy child—
Oh, is it she, the pallid rose?

"The wildered traveller sees her glide,
And hears her feeble voice with awe—
'Revenge,' she cries, 'on Murray's pride!
And woe for injured Bothwellhaugh!'"

He ceased—and cries of rage and grief
Burst mingling from the kindred band,
And half arose the kindling chief,
And half unsheathed his Arran brand.

* Lord Claud Hamilton, second son of the duke of Chatelherault, and commendator of the abbey of Paisley, acted a distinguished part during the troubles of Queen Mary's reign, and remained unalterably attached to the cause of that unfortunate princess. He led the van of her army at the fatal battle of Langside, and was one of the commanders at the Raid of Stirling, which had so nearly given complete success to the queen's faction. He was ancestor of the present marquis of Abercorn.

† This barony, stretching along the banks of the Eske, near Auchendinny, belonged to Bothwellhaugh, in right of his wife. The ruins of the mansion, from whence she was expelled in the brutal manner which occasioned her death, are still to be seen in a hollow glen beside the river. Popular report tenants them with the restless ghost of the Lady Bothwellhaugh; whom, however, it confounds with Lady Anne Bothwell, whose *Lament* is so popular. This spectre is so tenacious of her rights that, a part of the stones of the ancient edifice having been employed in building or repairing the present Woodhouselee, she has deemed it a part of her privilege to haunt that house also; and, even of very late years, has excited considerable disturbance and terror among the domestics. This is a more remarkable vindication of the *rights of ghosts*, as the present Woodhouselee, which gives his title to the Honourable Alexander Fraser Tytler, a senator of the College of Justice, is situated on the slope of the Pentland hills, distant at least four miles from her proper abode. She always appears in white, and with her child in her arms.

But who, o'er bush, o'er stream, and rock,
Rides headlong, with resistless speed,
Whose bloody poniard's frantic stroke
Drives to the leap his jaded steed;

Whose cheek is pale, whose eyeballs glare,
As one, some visioned sight that saw,
Whose hands are bloody, loose his hair?—
'Tis he! 'tis he! 'tis Bothwellhaugh!

From gory selle,* and reeling steed,
Sprung the fierce horseman with a bound,
And, reeking from the recent deed,
He dashed his carbine on the ground.

Sternly he spoke—"'Tis sweet to hear
In good green-wood the bugle blown,
But sweeter to Revenge's ear,
To drink a tyrant's dying groan.

"Your slaughtered quarry proudly trod,
At dawning morn, o'er dale and down,
But prouder base-born Murray rode
Through old Linlithgow's crowded town.

"From the wild Border's humbled side,
In haughty triumph, marchèd he,
While Knox relaxed his bigot pride,
And smiled, the traitorous pomp to see.

"But can stern Power, with all his vaunt,
Or Pomp, with all her courtly glare,
The settled heart of Vengeance daunt,
Or change the purpose of Despair?

"With hackbut bent,† my secret stand
Dark as the purposed deed, I chose,
And marked, where, mingling in his band,
Trooped Scottish pikes and English bows.

"Dark Morton,‡ girt with many a spear,
Murder's foul minion, led the van;
And clashed their broadswords in the rear,
The wild Macfarlanes'§ plaided clan.

* Saddle. A word used by Spenser, and other old authors.

† *i. e.* Gun cocked. The carbine with which the regent was shot is preserved at Hamilton Palace. It is a brass piece, of a middling length, very small in the bore, and what is rather extraordinary, appears to have been rifled or indented in the barrel. It had a matchlock, for which a modern firelock has been injudiciously substituted.

‡ Of this noted person it is enough to say, that he was active in the murder of David Rizzio, and at least privy to that of Darnley.

§ This clan of Lennox Highlanders were attached to the regent Murray.

"Glencairn and stout Parkhead* were nigh,
Obsequious at their Regent's rein,
And haggard Lindsay's iron eye,†
That saw fair Mary weep in vain.

"'Mid pennoned spears, a steely grove,
Proud Murray's plumage floated high;
Scarce could his trampling charger move,
So close the minions crowded nigh.‡

"From the raised visor's shade, his eye,
Dark rolling, glanced the ranks along,
And his steel truncheon, waved on high,
Seemed marshalling the iron throng.

"But yet his saddened brow confessed
A passing shade of doubt and awe;
Some fiend was whispering in his breast,
'Beware of injured Bothwellhaugh!'

"The death-shot parts—the charger springs—
Wild rises tumult's startling roar!—
And Murray's plumy helmet rings—
Rings on the ground, to rise no more.

"What joy the raptured youth can feel,
To hear her love the loved one tell,
Or he, who broaches on his steel
The wolf, by whom his infant fell!

"But dearer to my injured eye,
To see in dust proud Murray roll;
And mine was ten times trebled joy
To hear him groan his felon soul.

"My Margaret's spectre glided near;
With pride her bleeding victim saw;
And shrieked in his death-deafened ear,
'Remember injured Bothwellhaugh!'

* The earl of Glencairn was a steady adherent of the regent. George Douglas of Parkhead was a natural brother of the earl of Morton, whose horse was killed by the same ball by which Murray fell.

† Lord Lindsay, of the Byres, was the most ferocious and brutal of the regent's faction, and, as such, was employed to extort Mary's signature to the deed of resignation presented to her in Lochleven Castle. He discharged his commission with the most savage rigour; and it is even said, that when the weeping captive, in the act of signing, averted her eyes from the fatal deed, he pinched her arm with the grasp of his iron glove.

‡ Not only had the regent notice of the intended attempt upon his life, but even of the very house from which it was threatened. With that infatuation at which men wonder after such events have happened, he deemed it would be a sufficient precaution to ride briskly past the dangerous spot. But even this was prevented by the crowd: so that Bothwellhaugh had time to take a deliberate aim. —*Spottiswoode*, p. 233. *Buchanan.*

"Then speed thee, noble Chatlerault!
Spread to the wind thy bannered tree!
Each warrior bend his Clydesdale bow!—
Murray is fallen, and Scotland free."

Vaults every warrior to his steed;
Loud bugles join their wild acclaim—
"Murray is fallen, and Scotland freed!
Couch, Arran! couch thy spear of flame!"

But, see! the minstrel vision fails—
The glimmering spears are seen no more;
The shouts of war die on the gales,
Or sink in Evan's lonely roar.

For the loud bugle, pealing high,
The blackbird whistles down the vale,
And sunk in ivied ruins lie
The bannered towers of Evandale.

For chiefs, intent on bloody deed,
And Vengeance, shouting o'er the slain,
Lo! high-born Beauty rules the steed,
Or graceful guides the silken rein.

And long may Peace and Pleasure own
The maids, who list the minstrel's tale;
Nor e'er a ruder guest be known
On the fair banks of Evandale!

THE GREY BROTHER.

A FRAGMENT.

THE tradition, upon which the tale is founded, regards a house upon the barony of Gilmerton, near Lasswade, in Mid-Lothian. This building, now called Gilmerton Grange, was formerly named Burndale, from the following tragic adventure:—The barony of Gilmerton belonged, of yore, to a gentleman named Heron, who had one beautiful daughter. This young lady was seduced by the abbot of Newbottle, a richly-endowed abbey, upon the banks of the South Eske, now a seat of the marquis of Lothian. Heron came to the knowledge of this circumstance, and learned, also, that the lovers carried on their guilty intercourse by the contrivance of the lady's nurse, who lived at this house of Gilmerton Grange, or Burndale. He formed a resolution of bloody vengeance, undeterred by the supposed sanctity of the clerical character, or by the stronger claims of natural affection. Choosing, therefore, a dark and windy night, when the objects of his vengeance were engaged in a stolen interview, he set fire to a stack of dried thorns and

other combustibles, which he had caused to be piled against the house, and reduced to a pile of glowing ashes the dwelling, with all its inmates.

The scene with which the ballad opens, was suggested by a curious passage in the life of Alexander Peden, one of the wandering and persecuted teachers of the sect of Cameronians, during the reign of Charles II. and that of his successor James II.

THE Pope he was saying the high, high mass,
All on Saint Peter's day,
With the power to him given, by the saints in heaven,
To wash men's sins away.

The Pope he was saying the blessèd mass,
And the people kneeled around,
And from each man's soul his sins did pass,
As he kissed the holy ground.

And all among the crowded throng,
Was still, both limb and tongue,
While through vaulted roof, and aisles aloof,
The holy accents rung.

At the holiest word, he quivered for fear,
And faltered in the sound—
And, when he would the chalice rear,
He dropped it on the ground.

"The breath of one, of evil deed,
Pollutes our sacred day;
He has no portion in our creed,
No part in what I say.

"A being, whom no blessèd word
To ghostly peace can bring;
A wretch, at whose approach abhorred,
Recoils each holy thing.

"Up, up, unhappy! haste, arise!
My adjuration fear!
I charge thee not to stop my voice,
Nor longer tarry here!"

Amid them all a Pilgrim kneeled,
In gown of sackcloth grey:
Far journeying from his native field,
He first saw Rome that day.

For forty days and nights so drear,
I ween, he had not spoke,
And, save with bread and water clear,
His fast he ne'er had broke.

Amid the penitential flock,
Seemed none more bent to pray;

But, when the Holy Father spoke,
He rose, and went his way.

Again unto his native land,
His weary course he drew,
To Lothian's fair and fertile strand,
And Pentland's mountains blue.

His unblessed feet his native seat,
'Mid Eske's fair woods, regain;
Through woods more fair no stream more sweet
Rolls to the eastern main.

And lords to meet the Pilgrim came,
And vassals bent the knee;
For all 'mid Scotland's chiefs of fame,
Was none more famed than he.

And boldly for his country, still,
In battle he had stood,
Aye, e'en when, on the banks of Till,
Her noblest poured their blood.

Sweet are the paths, O, passing sweet!
By Eske's fair streams that run,
O'er airy steep, through copsewood deep,
Impervious to the sun.

There the rapt poet's step may rove,
And yield the muse the day;
There Beauty, led by timid Love,
May shun the tell-tale ray;

From that fair dome, where suit is paid
By blast of bugle free,*
To Auchendinny's† hazel glade,
And haunted Woodhouselee.

Who knows not Melville's‡ beechy grove;
And Roslin's§ rocky glen,

* The barony of Pennycuik is held by a singular tenure; the proprietor being bound to sit upon a large rocky fragment, called the Buckstane, and wind three blasts of a horn, when the king shall come to hunt on the Borough Muir, near Edinburgh. Hence the family have adopted as their crest a demi-forester proper, winding a horn, with the motto, *Free for a Blast*. The beautiful mansion-house of Pennycuik is much admired, both on account of the architecture and surrounding scenery.

† Auchendinny, situated upon the Eske, below Pennycuik, sometime the residence of the ingenious H. Mackenzie, esq., author of the "Man of Feeling," &c.

‡ Melville Castle is delightfully situated upon the Eske, near Lasswade. It gave the title of viscount to Lord Melville.

§ The ruins of Roslin Castle, the baronial residence of the ancient family of St. Clair, the Gothic chapel which is still in beautiful preservation, with the romantic and woody dell in which they are situated, belong to the right honourable the earl of Rosslyn, the representative of the former lords of Roslin.

Dalkeith,* which all the virtues love,
And classic Hawthornden?†

Yet never a path, from day to day,
The Pilgrim's footsteps range,
Save but the solitary way,
To Burndale's ruined Grange.

A woeful place was that, I ween,
As sorrow could desire;
For, nodding to the fall was each crumbling wall,
And the roof was scathed with fire.

It fell upon a summer's eve,
While on Carnethy's head,
The last faint gleams of the sun's low beams
Had streaked the grey with red;

And the convent bell did vespers tell,
Newbottle's oaks among,
And mingled with the solemn knell
Our Ladye's evening song:

The heavy knell, the choir's faint swell,
Came slowly down the wind,
And on the Pilgrim's ear they fell,
As his wonted path he did find.

Deep sunk in thought, I ween he was,
Nor ever raised his eye,
Until he came to that dreary place,
Which did all in ruins lie.

He gazed on the walls, so scathed with fire,
With many a bitter groan—
And there was aware of a Grey Friar,
Resting him on a stone.

"Now, Christ thee save!" said the Grey Brother;
"Some pilgrim thou seem'st to be;"
But in sore amaze did Lord Albert gaze,
Nor answer again made he.

"O come ye from east, or come ye from west,
Or bring relics from over the sea;

*The village and castle of Dalkeith belonged, of old, to the famous earl of Morton, but is now the residence of the noble family of Buccleuch. The park extends along the Eske, which is there joined by its sister stream of the same name.

†Hawthornden, the residence of the poet Drummond. Here Drummond received Ben Jonson, who journeyed from London on foot in order to visit him. The beauty of this striking scene has been much injured of late years, by the indiscriminate use of the axe. Upon the whole, tracing the Eske from its source till it joins the sea at Musselburgh, no stream in Scotland can boast such a varied succession of the most interesting objects, as well as of the most romantic and beautiful scenery.

Or come ye from the shrine of Saint James the divine,
Saint John of Beverley?"

I come not from the shrine of Saint James the divine,
Nor bring relics from over the sea;
I bring but a curse from our father, the Pope,
Which for ever will cling to me."

"Now, woeful pilgrim, say not so!
But kneel thee down by me,
And shrive thee so clean of thy deadly sin,
That absolvèd thou mayst be."

"And who art thou, thou Grey Brother,
That I should shrive to thee,
When he, to whom are given the keys of earth and heaven,
Has no power to pardon me?"

"O I am sent from a distant clime,
Five thousand miles away,
And all to absolve a foul, foul crime,
Done *here* 'twixt night and day."

The pilgrim kneeled him on the sand,
And thus began his saye—
When on his neck an ice-cold hand
Did that Grey Brother laye.

* * * * *

THOMAS THE RHYMER.

IN THREE PARTS.

Few personages are so renowned in tradition as Thomas of Ercildoune, known by the appellation of *The Rhymer*. Uniting, or supposing to unite, in his person, the powers of poetical composition and of vaticination, his memory, even after the lapse of five hundred years, is regarded with veneration by his countrymen. To give anything like a certain history of this remarkable man would be indeed difficult; but the curious may derive some satisfaction from the particulars here brought together.

It is agreed on all hands, that the residence, and probably the birthplace, of this ancient bard, was Ercildoune, a village situated upon the Leader, two miles above its junction with the Tweed. The ruins of an ancient tower are still pointed out as the Rhymer's castle. The uniform tradition bears, that his surname was Lermont, or Learmont; and that the appellation of *The Rhymer* was conferred upon him in consequence of his

poetical compositions. There remains, nevertheless, some doubt upon the subject.

We are better able to ascertain the period at which Thomas of Ercildoune lived, being the latter end of the thirteenth century. I am inclined to place his death a little farther back than Mr. Pinkerton, who supposes that he was alive in 1300 (*List of Scottish Poets*). It cannot be doubted, that Thomas of Ercildoune was a remarkable and important person in his own time, since, very shortly after his death, we find him celebrated as a prophet and as a poet. Whether he himself made any pretensions to the first of these characters, or whether it was gratuitously conferred upon him by the credulity of posterity, it seems difficult to decide. If we may believe Mackenzie, Learmont only versified the prophecies delivered by Eliza, an inspired nun of a convent at Haddington. But of this there seems not to be most distant proof. On the contrary, all ancient authors, who quote the Rhymer's prophecies, uniformly suppose them to have been emitted by himself.

The popular tale bears, that Thomas was carried off, at an early age, to the Fairy Land, where he acquired all the knowledge which made him afterwards so famous. After seven years' residence, he was permitted to return to the earth, to enlighten and astonish his countrymen by his prophetic powers; still, however, remaining bound to return to his royal mistress, when she should intimate her pleasure. Accordingly, while Thomas was making merry with his friends in the Tower of Ercildoune, a person came running in, and told, with marks of fear and astonishment, that a hart and hind had left the neighbouring forest, and were, composedly and slowly, parading the street of the village. The prophet instantly arose, left his habitation, and followed the wonderful animals to the forest, whence he was never seen to return. According to the popular belief, he still "drees his weird" in Fairy Land, and is one day expected to revisit earth. In the meanwhile, his memory is held in the most profound respect. The Eildon Tree, from beneath the shade of which he delivered his prophecies, now no longer exists; but the spot is marked by a large stone, called the Eildon Tree Stone. A neighbouring rivulet takes the name of the Bogle Burn (Goblin Brook) from the Rhymer's supernatural visitants.

It seemed to the Editor unpardonable to dismiss a person so important in Border tradition as the Rhymer, without some farther notice than a simple commentary upon the following ballad. It is given from a copy, obtained from a lady residing not far from Ercildoune, corrected and enlarged by one in Mrs. Brown's MSS. The former copy, however, as might be expected, is far more minute as to local description. To this old tale the Editor has ventured to add a Second Part, consisting of a kind of cento, from the printed prophecies vulgarly ascribed to the Rhymer; and a Third Part, entirely modern, founded upon the tradition of his having returned with the hart and hind, to the Land of Faërie. To make his peace with the more severe antiquaries, the Editor

has prefixed to the Second Part some remarks on Learmont's prophecies.

PART FIRST.

ANCIENT.

TRUE Thomas lay on Huntlie bank;
A ferlie* he spied wi' his e'e;†
And there he saw a ladye bright,
Come riding down by the Eildon Tree.

Her shirt was o' the grass-green silk,
Her mantle o' the velvet fyne;
At ilka‡ tett of her horse's mane,
Hang fifty siller bells and nine.

True Thomas, he pulled aff his cap,
And louted low down to his knee,—
"All hail, thou mighty queen of heaven!
For thy peer on earth I never did see."

"O no, O no, Thomas," she said;
"That name does not belang to me;
I am but the queen of fair Elfland,
That am hither come to visit thee.

"Harp and carp,§ Thomas," she said;
"Harp and carp along with me;
And if ye dare to kiss my lips,
Sure of your bodie I will be."

"Betide me weal, betide me woe,
That weird‖ shall never danton me."
Syne he has kissed her rosy lips,
All underneath the Eildon Tree.

"Now, ye maun go wi' me," she said;
"True Thomas, ye maun go wi' me;
And ye maun serve me seven years,
Through weal or woe as may chance to be."

She mounted on her milk-white steed;
She's ta'en true Thomas up behind;
And aye, whene'er her bridle rung,
The steed flew swifter than the wind.

O they rade on, and farther on;
The steed gaed swifter than the wind,
Until they reached a desart wide,
And living land was left behind.

* A wonder.—*Jamieson.* † The eye. ‡ Each. § Sing.
‖ *That weird, &c.*—That destiny shall never frighten me.

"Light down, light down, now, true Thomas,
And lean your head upon my knee:
Abide, and rest a little space,
And I will show you ferlies three.

"O see ye not yon narrow road,
So thick beset with thorns and briers?—
That is the path of righteousness,
Though after it but few inquires.

"And see not ye that braid, braid road,
That lies across that lily leven?*—
That is the path of wickedness,
Though some call it the road to heaven.

"And see not ye that bonny road,
That winds about the fernie brae?—
That is the road to fair Elfland,
Where thou and I this night maun gae.

"But, Thomas, ye maun hold your tongue
Whatever ye may hear or see;
For, if you speak word in Elfiyn land,
Ye'll ne'er get back to your ain countrie."

O they rade on, and farther on,
And they waded through rivers aboon† the knee,
And they saw neither sun nor moon,
But they heard the roaring of the sea.

It was mirk,‡ mirk night, and there was nae stern§ light,
And they waded through red blude to the knee,
For a' the blude, that's shed on earth,
Rins through the springs o' that countrie.

Syne they came on to a garden green,
And she pu'd an apple frae a tree‖—
"Take this for thy wages, true Thomas;
It will give thee the tongue that can never lie."

"My tongue is mine ain," true Thomas said;
"A gudely gift ye wad gie to me!
I neither dought¶ to buy nor sell,
At fair or tryst where I may be.

"I dought neither speak to prince or peer,
Nor ask of grace from fair ladye."
"Now hold thy peace!" the ladye said,
"For, as I say, so must it be."

* Lily leven is a lawn overspread with lilies or flowers.—*Jamieson.*
† Above. ‡ Dark. § Star.
‖ The traditional commentary upon this ballad informs us, that the apple was the produce of the fatal Tree of Knowledge, and that the garden was the terrestrial paradise. The repugnance of Thomas to be debarred the use of falsehood when he might find it convenient, has a comic effect. ¶ Am able.

He has gotten a coat of the even cloth,
And a pair of shoes of velvet green;
And, till seven years were gane and past,
True Thomas on earth was never seen.

PART SECOND.

ALTERED FROM ANCIENT PROPHECIES.

THE prophecies, ascribed to Thomas of Ercildoune have been the principal means of securing to him remembrance "amongst the sons of his people." The author of "Sir Tristrem" would long ago have joined, in the vale of oblivion, "Clerk of Tranent, who wrote the adventure of 'Schir Gawain,'" if, by good hap, the same current of ideas respecting antiquity, which causes Virgil to be regarded as a magician by the Lazaroni of Naples, had not exalted the bard of Ercildoune to the prophetic character. Perhaps, indeed, he himself affected it during his life. We know, at least, for certain, that a belief in his supernatural knowledge was current soon after his death. His prophecies are alluded to by Barbour, by Winton, and by Henry the Minstrel, or *Blind Harry*, as he is usually termed. None of these authors, however, give the words of any of the Rhymer's vaticinations, but merely narrate, historically, his having predicted the events of which they speak. The earliest of the prophecies ascribed to him, which is now extant, is quoted by Mr. Pinkerton from a MS. It is supposed to be a response from Thomas of Ercildoune to a question from the heroic countess of March, renowned for the defence of the Castle of Dunbar against the English, and termed, in the familiar dialect of her time, *Black Agnes* of Dunbar. This prophecy is remarkable, in so far as it bears very little resemblance to any verses published in the printed copy of the Rhymer's supposed prophecies.

Corspatrick (Comes Patrick), earl of March, but more commonly taking his title from his castle of Dunbar, acted a noted part during the wars of Edward I. in Scotland. As Thomas of Ercildoune is said to have delivered to him his famous prophecy of King Alexander's death, the author has chosen to introduce him into the following ballad. All the prophetic verses are selected from Hart's publication.

WHEN seven years were come and gane,
The sun blinked fair on pool and stream;
And Thomas lay on Huntlie bank,
Like one awakened from a dream.

He heard the trampling of a steed,
He saw the flash of armour flee,

And he beheld a gallant knight
Come riding down by the Eildon Tree.

He was a stalwart knight, and strong;
Of giant make he 'peared to be:
He stirred his horse, as he were wode,*
Wi' gilded spurs, of faushion free.

Says—"Well met, well met, true Thomas!
Some uncouth ferlies show to me."
Says—"Christ thee save, Corspatrick brave!
Thrice welcome, good Dunbar, to me!

"Light down, light down, Corspatrick brave,
And I will show thee curses three,
Shall gar fair Scotland greet and grane,
And change the green to the black livery.

"A storm shall roar, this very hour,
From Rosse's Hills to Solway Sea."
"Ye lied, ye lied, ye warlock hoar!
For the sun shines sweet on fauld and lea."

He put his hand on the earlie's head;
He showed him a rock, beside the sea,
Where a king lay stiff, beneath his steed,†
And steel-dight nobles wiped their e'e.

"The neist curse lights on Branxton Hills:
By Flodden's high and heathery side,
Shall wave a banner, red as blude,
And chieftains throng wi' meikle pride.

"A Scottish king shall come full keen;
The ruddy lion beareth he:
A feathered arrow sharp, I ween,
Shall make him wink and warre to see.

"When he is bloody, and all to bledde,
Thus to his men he still shall say—
'For God's sake, turn ye back again,
And give yon southern folk a fray!
Why should I lose the right is mine?
My doom is not to die this day.'‡

"Yet turn ye to the eastern hand,
And woe and wonder ye sall see:
How forty thousand spearmen stand,
Where yon rank river meets the sea.

"There shall the lion lose the gylte,
And the libbards§ bear it clean away;
At Pinkyn Cleuch there shall be spilt
Much gentil blude that day."

* Mad.
† King Alexander, killed by a fall from his horse, near Kinghorn.
‡ The uncertainty which long prevailed in Scotland concerning the fate of James IV. is well known.
§ Leopards.

"Enough, enough, of curse and ban;
Some blessing show thou now to me,
Or by the faith o' my bodie," Corspatrick said,
"Ye shall rue the day ye e'er saw me!"

"The first of blessings I shall thee show,
Is by a burn, that's called of bread;
Where Saxon men shall tine the bow,
And find their arrows lack the head.

"Beside that brigg, out ower that burn,
Where the water bickereth bright and sheen,
Shall many a falling courser spurn,
And knights shall die in battle keen.

"Beside a headless cross of stone,
The libbards there shall lose the gree;*
The raven shall come, the erne shall go,
And drink the Saxon blood sae free.
The cross of stone they shall not know,
So thick the corses there shall be."

"But tell me now," said brave Dunbar,
"True Thomas, tell now unto me,
What man shall rule the isle Britain,
Even from the north to the southern sea?"

"A French queen shall bear the son,
Shall rule all Britain to the sea;
He of the Bruce's blood shall come,
As near as in the ninth degree.

"The waters worship shall his race;
Likewise the waves of the farthest sea;
For they shall ride ower ocean wide,
With hempen bridles and horse of tree."

PART THIRD.

MODERN.

THOMAS THE RHYMER was renowned among his contemporaries, as the author of the celebrated romance of "Sir Tristrem." Of this once-admired poem only one copy is now known to exist, which is in the Advocates' Library. The Editor, in 1804, published a small edition of this curious work; which, if it does not revive the reputation of the bard of Ercildoune, is at least the earliest specimen of Scottish poetry hitherto published. Some account of this romance has already been given to the world in Mr. ELLIS'S "Specimens of Ancient Poetry," vol. i. p. 165, part iii. 410; a work to which our predecessors and our posterity are alike obliged; the former, for the preservation of the

* Prize.

best-selected examples of their poetical taste; and the latter, for a history of the English language, which will only cease to be interesting with the existence of our mother tongue, and all that genius and learning have recorded in it. It is sufficient here to mention, that so great was the reputation of the romance of "Sir Tristrem," that few were thought capable of reciting it after the manner of the author.

The following attempt to commemorate the Rhymer's poetical fame, and the traditional account of his marvellous return to Fairy Land, being entirely modern, would have been placed with greater propriety among the class of Modern Ballads, had it not been for its immediate connection with the first and second parts of the same story.

WHEN seven years more had come and gone,
Was war through Scotland spread,
And Ruberslaw showed high Dunyon
His beacon blazing red.

Then all by bonny Coldingknow,
Pitched pallioun* took their room,
And crested helms, and spears a rowe,
Glanced gaily through the broom.

The Leader, rolling to the Tweed,
Resounds the ensenzie;†
They roused the deer from Caddenhead,
To distant Torwoodlee.

The feast was spread in Ercildoune,
In Learmont's high and ancient hall;
And there were knights of great renown,
And ladies, laced in pall.

Nor lacked they, while they sat at dine,
The music nor the tale,
Nor goblets of the blood-red wine,
Nor mantling quaighs‡ of ale.

True Thomas rose, with harp in hand,
When as the feast was done;
(In minstrel strife, in Fairy Land,
The elfin harp he won.)

Hushed were the throng, both limb and tongue,
And harpers for envy pale;
And armèd lords leaned on their swords,
And hearkened to the tale.

In numbers high, the witching tale
The prophet poured along;
No after bard might e'er avail
Those numbers to prolong.

* Tents. † War-cry, or gathering-word.
‡ Wooden cups, composed of staves hooped together.

Yet fragments of the lofty strain
Float down the tide of years,
As, buoyant on the stormy main,
A parted wreck appears.

He sung King Arthur's table round,
The warrior of the lake;
How courteous Gawaine met the wound,
And bled for ladies' sake.

But chief, in gentle Tristrem's praise,
The notes melodious swell;
Was none excelled in Arthur's days,
The knight of Lionelle.

For Marke, his cowardly uncle's right,
A venomed wound he bore;
When fierce Morholde he slew in fight,
Upon the Irish shore.

No art the poison might withstand;
No medicine could be found,
Till lovely Isolde's lilye hand
Had probed the rankling wound.

With gentle hand and soothing tongue,
She bore the leech's part;
And, while she o'er his sick-bed hung,
He paid her with his heart.

O fatal was the gift, I ween!
For, doomed in evil tide,
The maid must be rude Cornwall's queen,
His cowardly uncle's bride.

Their loves, their woes, the gifted bard
In fairy tissue wove;
Where lords, and knights, and ladies bright,
In gay confusion strove.

The Garde Joyeuse, amid the tale,
High reared its glittering head;
And Avalon's enchanted vale
In all its wonders spread.

Brangwain was there, and Segramore,
And fiend-born Merlin's gramarye:
Of that famed wizard's mighty lore,
O who could sing but he?

Through many a maze the winning song
In changeful passion led,
Till bent at length the listening throng
O'er Tristrem's dying bed.

His ancient wounds their scars expand
With agony his heart is wrung:

O where is Isolde's lilye hand,
And where her soothing tongue?

She comes, she comes!—like flash of flame
Can lovers' footsteps fly:
She comes, she comes!—she only came
To see her Tristrem die.

She saw him die: her latest sigh
Joined in a kiss his parting breath:
The gentlest pair that Britain bare,
United are in death.

There paused the harp; its lingering sound
Died slowly on the ear;
The silent guests still bent around,
For still they seemed to hear.

Then woe broke forth in murmurs weak
Nor ladies heaved alone the sigh;
But, half ashamed, the rugged cheek
Did many a gauntlet dry.

On Leader's stream, and Learmont's tower,
The mists of evening close;
In camp, in castle, or in bower
Each warrior sought repose.

Lord Douglas in his lofty tent,
Dreamed o'er the woeful tale;
When footsteps light, across the bent,
The warrior's ears assail.

He starts, he wakes:—"What, Richard, ho!
Arise, my page, arise!
What venturous wight, at dead of night,
Dare step where Douglas lies?"

Then forth they rushed: by Leader's tide,
A selcouth* sight they see—
A hart and hind pace side by side,
As white as snow on Fairnalie.

Beneath the moon, with gesture proud,
They stately move and slow;
Nor scare they at the gathering crowd,
Who marvel as they go.

To Learmont's tower a message sped,
As fast as page might run;
And Thomas started from his bed,
And soon his clothes did on.

First he woxe pale, and then woxe red;
Never a word he spake but three;—

* Wondrous.

"My sand is run; my thread is spun;
This sign regardeth me."

The elfin harp his neck around,
In minstrel guise, he hung;
And on the wind, in doleful sound,
Its dying accents rung.

Then forth he went; yet turned him oft
To view his ancient hall;
On the grey tower, in lustre soft,
The autumn moonbeams fall.

And Leader's waves, like silver sheen,
Danced shimmering in the ray:
In deepening mass, at distance seen,
Broad Soltra's mountains lay.

"Farewell, my father's ancient tower!
A long farewell," said he:
"The scene of pleasure, pomp, or power,
Thou never more shalt be.

"To Learmont's name no foot of earth
Shall here again belong,
And on thy hospitable hearth
The hare shall leave her young.

"Adieu! Adieu!" again he cried,
All as he turned him roun'—
"Farewell to Leader's silver tide!
Farewell to Ercildoune!"

The hart and hind approached the place,
As lingering yet he stood;
And there, before Lord Douglas' face,
With them he crossed the flood.

Lord Douglas leaped on his berry-brown steed,
And spurred him the Leader o'er;
But, though he rode with lightning speed,
He never saw them more.

Some said to hill, and some to glen,
Their wondrous course had been;
But ne'er in haunts of living men
Again was Thomas seen.

WAR SONG

OF THE ROYAL EDINBURGH LIGHT DRAGOONS.

THE following War-song was written during the apprehension of an invasion. The corps of volunteers, to which it was addressed, was raised in 1797, consisting of gentlemen, mounted and armed at their own expense. It still subsists, as the Right Troop of the Royal Mid-Lothian Light Cavalry, commanded by the Hon. Lieutenant-Colonel Dundas. The noble and constitutional measure of arming freemen in defence of their own rights, was nowhere more successful than in Edinburgh, which furnished a force of 3,000 armed and disciplined volunteers, including a regiment of cavalry, from the city and county, and two corps of artillery, each capable of serving twelve guns. To such a force, above all others, might, in similar circumstances, be applied the exhortation of our ancient Galgacus: "*Proinde ituri in aciem, et majores vestros et posteros cogitate.*"

To horse! to horse! the standard flies,
The bugles sound the call;
The Gallic navy stems the seas,
The voice of battle 's on the breeze,—
Arouse ye, one and all!

From high Dunedin's towers we come,
A band of brothers true;
Our casques the leopard's spoils surround,
With Scotland's hardy thistle crowned;
We boast the red and blue.*

Though tamely crouch to Gallia's frown
Dull Holland's tardy train;
Their ravished toys though Romans mourn,
Though gallant Switzers vainly spurn,
And, foaming, gnaw the chain;

O! had they marked the avenging call
Their brethren's† murder gave,
Disunion ne'er their ranks had mown,
Nor patriot valour, desperate grown,
Sought freedom in the grave!

* The Royal colours.

† The allusion is to the massacre of the Swiss guards, on the fatal 10th of August, 1792. It is painful, but not useless, to remark, that the passive temper with which the Swiss regarded the death of their bravest countrymen, mercilessly slaughtered in discharge of their duty, encouraged and authorized the progressive injustice by which the Alps, once the seat of the most virtuous and free people on the Continent, were, at length, converted into the citadel of a foreign and military despot. A state degraded is half enslaved.

Shall we, too, bend the stubborn head,
In Freedom's temple born,
Dress our pale cheek in timid smile,
To hail a master in our isle,
Or brook a victor's scorn?

No! though destruction o'er the land
Come pouring as a flood,
The sun, that sees our falling day,
Shall mark our sabres' deadly sway,
And set that night in blood.

For gold let Gallia's legions fight,
Or plunder's bloody gain;
Unbribed, unbought, our swords we draw,
To guard our King, to fence our Law,
Nor shall their edge be vain.

If ever breath of British gale
Shall fan the tricolor,
Or footstep of invader rude,
With rapine foul, and red with blood,
Pollute our happy shore,—

Then farewell home! and farewell friends!
Adieu each tender tie!
Resolved, we mingle in the tide,
Where charging squadrons furious ride,
To conquer, or to die.

To horse! to horse! the sabres gleam;
High sounds our bugle call;
Combined by honour's sacred tie;
Our word is *Laws and Liberty!*
March forward, one and all!

Translations and Imitations of German Ballads.

THE CHASE.

[This and the following ballad were first published anonymously in a small book, entitled, "The Chase and William and Helen;" two ballads, from the German of Gottfried Augustus Bürger, Edinburgh: Printed by Mundell and Son, Bank-close, for Manners and Miller, Parliament-square; and sold by T. Cadell, jun., and W. Davies, in the Strand, London. 1796. 4to. It goes generally by the title, "The Wild Huntsman."]

THIS is a translation, or rather an imitation, of the "Wilde Jäger" of the German poet Bürger. The tradition upon which it is founded bears, that formerly a Wildgrave, or keeper of a royal forest, named Falkenburg, was so much addicted to the pleasures of the chase, and otherwise so extremely profligate and cruel, that he not only followed this unhallowed amusement on the Sabbath, and other days consecrated to religious duty, but accompanied it with the most unheard-of oppression upon the poor peasants who were under his vassalage. When this second Nimrod died, the people adopted a superstition, founded probably on the many various uncouth sounds heard in the depth of a German forest, during the silence of the night. They conceived they still heard the cry of the Wildgrave's hounds; and the well-known cheer of the deceased hunter, the sounds of his horse's feet, and the rustling of the branches before the game, the pack, and the sportsmen, are also distinctly discriminated; but the phantoms are rarely, if ever, visible. Once, as a benighted *Chasseur* heard this infernal chase pass by him, at the sound of the halloo, with which the Spectre Huntsman cheered his hounds, he could not refrain from crying, *Glück zu Falkenburg!*" [Good sport to ye, Falkenburg!] "Dost thou wish me good sport?" answered a hoarse voice; "thou shalt share the game;" and there was thrown at him what seemed to be a huge piece of foul carrion. The daring *Chasseur* lost two of his best horses soon after, and never perfectly recovered the personal effects of this ghostly greeting. This tale, though told with some variations, is universally believed all over Germany.

The French had a similar tradition concerning an aërial hunter, who infested the forest of Fontainebleau.

I.

THE Wildgrave* winds his bugle horn,
To horse, to horse! halloo, halloo!
His fiery courser snuffs the morn,
And thronging serfs their lords pursue.

II.

The eager pack, from couples freed,
Dash through the bush, the brier, the brake;
While, answering hound, and horn, and steed,
The mountain echoes startling wake.

III.

The beams of God's own hallowed day
Had painted yonder spire with gold,
And, calling sinful man to pray,
Loud, long, and deep, the bell had tolled:

IV.

But still the Wildgrave onward rides;
Halloo, halloo! and, hark again!
When, spurring from opposing sides,
Two Stranger Horsemen join the train.

V.

Who was each Stranger, left and right,
Well may I guess, but dare not tell;
The right-hand steed was silver white,
The left, the swarthy hue of hell.

VI.

The right-hand horseman, young and fair,
His smile was like the morn of May;
The left, from eye of tawny glare,
Shot midnight lightning's lurid ray.

VII.

He waved his huntsman's cap on high,
Cried, "Welcome, welcome, noble lord!
What sport can earth, or sea, or sky,
To match the princely chase afford?"—

VIII.

"Cease thy loud bugle's clanging knell,"
Cried the fair youth with silver voice;
"And for Devotion's choral swell,
Exchange the rude unhallowed noise.

IX.

"To-day, the ill-omened chase forbear,
Yon bell yet summons to the fane;
To-day the Warning Spirit hear,
To-morrow thou mayst mourn in vain."—

*In the first edition "Earl Walter" is the term applied throughout the ballad, instead of "the Wildgrave."

X.

"Away, and sweep the glades along!"
The Sable Hunter hoarse replies;
"To muttering monks leave matin-song,
And bells, and books, and mysteries."—

XI.

The Wildgrave spurred his ardent steed,
And, launching forward with a bound,
"Who, for thy drowsy priestlike rede,
Would leave the jovial horn and hound?

XII.

"Hence, if our manly sport offend!
With pious fools go chant and pray:—
Well hast thou spoke, my dark-browed friend;
Halloo, halloo! and, hark away!"*—

XIII.

The Wildgrave spurred his courser light,
O'er moss and moor, o'er holt and hill;
And on the left, and on the right,
Each Stranger Horseman followed still.

XIV.

Up springs, from yonder tangled thorn,
A stag more white than mountain snow;
And louder rung the Wildgrave's horn,
"Hark, forward, forward! holla, ho!"

XV.

A heedless wretch has crossed the way;
He gasps the thundering hoofs below;—
But, live who can, or die who may,
Still, "Forward, forward!" On they go.

XVI.

See, where yon simple fences meet,
A field with autumn's blessings crowned;
See, prostrate at the Wildgrave's feet,
A husbandman, with toil embrowned:

XVII.

"O mercy, mercy, noble lord!
Spare the poor's pittance," was his cry,†

* In the first edition this, and the following verse, read thus:—

"No! pious fool, I scorn thy lore;
Let him who ne'er the chase durst prove
Go join with thee the droning choir,
And leave me to the sport I love.

"Fast, fast, Earl Walter onward rides,
O'er moss and moor, o'er holt and hill,
And onward fast, on either side,
The stranger horsemen followed still."

† First edition:—

"Spare the hard pittance of the poor."

"Earned by the sweat these brows have poured,
In scorching hour of fierce July." *—

XVIII.

Earnest the right-hand Stranger pleads,
The left still cheering to the prey;
The impetuous Earl no warning heeds,
But furious holds the onward way.

XIX.

"Away, thou hound! so basely born,
Or dread the scourge's echoing blow!"
Then loudly rung his bugle-horn,
"Hark forward, forward, holla, ho!"

XX.

So said, so done:—A single bound
Clears the poor labourer's humble pale;
Wild follows man, and horse, and hound,
Like dark December's stormy gale.

XXI.

And man, and horse, and hound, and horn,
Destructive sweep the field along;
While, joying o'er the wasted corn,
Fell Famine marks the maddening throng.

XXII.

Again up-roused the timorous prey
Scours moss, and moor, and holt, and hill;
Hard run, he feels his strength decay,
And trusts for life his simple skill.

XXIII.

Too dangerous solitude appeared;
He seeks the shelter of the crowd;
Amid the flock's domestic herd
His harmless head he hopes to shroud.

XXIV.

O'er moss, and moor, and holt, and hill,
His track the steady blood-hounds trace;
O'er moss and moor, unwearied still,
The furious Earl pursues the chase.†

XXV.

Full lowly did the herdsman fall;‡—
"O spare, thou noble Baron, spare

* First edition:—
"In scorching July's sultry hour."
† First edition:—
"O'er moss and moor, and holt and hill,
The unwearied Earl pursues the chase."
‡ First edition:—
"The anxious herdsman lowly falls."

These herds, a widow's little all;
These flocks, an orphan's fleecy care"—

XXVI.

Earnest the right-hand Stranger pleads,
The left still cheering to the prey;
The Earl nor prayer nor pity heeds,*
But furious keeps the onward way.

XXVII.

—"Unmannered dog! To stop my sport
Vain were thy cant and beggar whine,
Though human spirits, of thy sort,
Were tenants of these carrion kine!"—

XXVIII.

Again he winds his bugle-horn,
"Hark forward, forward, holla, ho!"
And through the herd, in ruthless scorn,
He cheers his furious hounds to go.

XXIX.

In heaps the throttled victims fall;
Down sinks their mangled herdsman near;
The murderous cries the stag appal,—
Again he starts, new-nerved by fear.

XXX.

With blood besmeared, and white with foam,
While big the tears of anguish pour,
He seeks amid the forest's gloom,
The humble hermit's hallowed bower.†

XXXI.

But man, and horse, and horn, and hound,
Fast rattling on his traces go;
The sacred chapel rung around
With, "Hark away; and, holla, ho!"

XXXII.

All mild, amid the rout profane,
The holy hermit poured his prayer;—
"Forbear with blood God's house to stain;
Revere his altar, and forbear!

XXXIII.

"The meanest brute has rights to plead,
Which, wronged by cruelty, or pride,
Draw vengeance on the ruthless head:
Be warned at length, and turn aside."—

* First edition:—
"Nor prayer nor pity Walter heeds."
† First edition: "hut obscure."

XXXIV.

Still the Fair Horseman anxious pleads;
The Black, wild whooping, points the prey:—
Alas! the Earl no warning heeds,
But frantic keeps the forward way.

XXXV.

"Holy or not, or right or wrong,
Thy altar, and its rites, I spurn;
Not sainted martyrs' sacred song,
Not God himself, shall make me turn!"—

XXXVI.

He spurs his horse, he winds his horn,
"Hark forward, forward, holla, ho!"—
But off, on whirlwind's pinions borne,
The stag, the hut, the hermit, go.

XXXVII.

And horse, and man, and horn, and hound,
And clamour of the chase, was gone;
For hoofs, and howls, and bugle sound,
A deadly silence reigned alone.

XXXVIII.

Wild gazed the affrighted Earl around;
He strove in vain to wake his horn;
In vain to call; for not a sound
Could from his anxious lips be borne.

XXXIX.

He listens for his trusty hounds;
No distant baying reached his ears:
His courser, rooted to the ground,
The quickening spur unmindful bears.

XL.

Still dark and darker frown the shades,*
Dark, as the darkness of the grave;
And not a sound the still invades,
Save what a distant torrent gave.

XLI.

High o'er the sinner's humbled head
At length the solemn silence broke;
And, from a cloud of swarthy red,
The awful voice of thunder spoke:

XLII.

"Oppressor of creation fair!
Apostate Spirits' hardened tool!
Scorner of God! Scourge of the poor!
The measure of thy cup is full.

* First edition: "round it spreads."

XLIII.

"Be chased forever through the wood,
Forever roam the affrighted wild;
And let thy fate instruct the proud,
God's meanest creature is his child."—

XLIV.

'Twas hushed: One flash, of sombre glare,
With yellow tinged the forests brown;
Uprose the Wildgrave's bristling hair,
And horror chilled each nerve and bone.

XLV.

Cold poured the sweat in freezing rill;
A rising wind began to sing;
And louder, louder, louder still,
Brought storm and tempest on its wing.

XLVI.

Earth heard the call;—Her entrails rend;*
From yawning rifts, with many a yell,
Mixed with sulphureous flames, ascend
The misbegotten dogs of hell.

XLVII.

What ghastly Huntsman next arose,
Well may I guess, but dare not tell;
His eye like midnight lightning glows,
His steed the swarthy hue of hell.

XLVIII.

The Wildgrave flies o'er bush and thorn,
With many a shriek of helpless woe;
Behind him hound, and horse, and horn,
And, "Hark away, and holla, ho!"

XLIX.

With wild despair's reverted eye,
Close, close behind, he marks the throng,
With bloody fangs, and eager cry;—
In frantic fear he scours along.

L.

Still, still shall last the dreadful chase,†
Till time itself shall have an end:
By day, they scour earth's caverned space,
At midnight's witching hour, ascend.

*First edition:—
"The earth is rocked, it quakes, it rends."
†First edition:—
"Still shall the dreadful chase endure,
Till time itself shall have an end;
By day earth's tortured womb they scour."

LI.

This is the horn, the hound, and horse,
That oft the 'lated peasant hears;
Appalled, he signs the frequent cross,
When the wild din invades his ears.

LII.

The wakeful priest oft drops a tear
For human pride, for human woe,
When, at his midnight mass, he hears
The infernal cry of, "Holla, ho!"

WILLIAM AND HELEN.

In the preface to the edition published anonymously in 1796, Sir Walter Scott says:—"The first two lines of the forty-seventh stanza, descriptive of the speed of the lovers, may perhaps bring to the recollection of many a passage extremely similar, in a translation of "Leonora," which first appeared in the "Monthly Magazine."* In justice to himself, the translator thinks it his duty to acknowledge that his curiosity was first attracted to this truly romantic story, by a gentleman, who, having heard "Leonora" once read in manuscript, could only recollect the general outlines, and part of a couplet which, from the singularity of its structure and frequent recurrence, had remained impressed upon his memory. If, from despair of rendering the passage so happily, the property of another has been invaded, the translator makes the only atonement now in his power, by restoring it thus publicly to the rightful owner. For the information of those to whom such obsolete expressions may be less familiar, it may be noticed that the word *serf*, means a vassal; and that to *busk* and *boune*, is to dress and prepare one's self for a journey.

I.

From heavy dreams fair Helen rose
And eyed the dawning red:
"Alas, my love, thou tarriest long?
O art thou false or dead?"

II.

With gallant Frederick's princely power
He sought the bold Crusade;
But not a word from Judah's wars
Told Helen how he sped.

III.

With Paynim and with Saracen
At length a truce was made,

* This was done by Mr. William Taylor, of Norwich.

And every knight returned to dry
The tears his love had shed.

IV.

Our gallant host was homeward bound
With many a song of joy;
Green waved the laurel in each plume,
The badge of victory.

V.

And old and young, and sire and son,
To meet them crowd the way,
With shouts, and mirth, and melody
The debt of love to pay.

VI.

Full many a maid her true love met,
And sobbed in his embrace,
And fluttering joy in tears and smiles
Arrayed full many a face.

VII.

Nor joy nor smile for Helen sad;
She sought the host in vain;
For none could tell her William's fate,
If faithless, or if slain.

VIII.

The martial band is passed and gone;
She rends her raven hair,
And in distraction's bitter mood
She weeps with wild despair.

IX.

"O, rise, my child," her mother said,
"Nor sorrow thus in vain;
A perjured lover's fleeting heart
No tears recall again."

X.

"O mother, what is gone, is gone,
What's lost, for ever lorn:
Death, death alone can comfort me;
O had I ne'er been born!

XI.

"O break, my heart, O break at once!
Drink my life-blood, Despair!
No joy remains on earth for me,
For me in heaven no share."

XII.

"O enter not in judgment, Lord!"
The pious mother prays;
"Impute not guilt to thy frail child!
She knows not what she says.

XIII.

"O say thy Pater Noster, child!
O turn to God and grace!
His will, that turned thy bliss to bale,
Can change thy bale to bliss."

XIV.

"O mother, mother! What is bliss?
O mother, what is bale?
My William's love was heaven on earth,
Without it earth is hell.

XV.

"Why should I pray to ruthless Heaven,
Since my loved William 's slain?
I only prayed for William's sake,
And all my prayers were vain."

XVI.

"O take the sacrament, my child,
And check these tears that flow;
By resignation's humble prayer,
O hallowed be thy woe!"

XVII.

"No sacrament can quench this fire,
Or slake this scorching pain:
No sacrament can bid the dead
Arise and live again.

XVIII.

"O break, my heart, O break at once!
Be thou my god, Despair!
Heaven's heaviest blow has fallen on me,
And vain each fruitless prayer."

XIX.

"O enter not in judgment, Lord,
With thy frail child of clay!
She knows not what her tongue has spoke,
Impute it not, I pray!

XX.

"Forbear, my child, this desperate woe,
And turn to God and grace;
Well can devotion's heavenly glow
Convert thy bale to bliss."

XXI.

"O mother, mother, what is bliss?
O mother, what is bale?
Without my William what were heaven,
Or with him what were hell?"

XXII.

Wild she arraigns the eternal doom,
Upbraids each sacred power,
Till, spent, she sought her silent room
All in the lonely tower.

XXIII.

She beat her breast, she wrung her hands,
Till sun and day were o'er,
And through the glimmering lattice shone
The twinkling of the star.

XXIV.

Then, crash! the heavy drawbridge fell,
That o'er the moat was hung;
And, clatter! clatter! on its boards
The hoof of courser rung.

XXV.

The clank of echoing steel was heard
As off the rider bounded;
And slowly on the winding stair
A heavy footstep sounded.

XXVI.

And hark! and hark! a knock—Tap! tap!
A rustling stifled noise;—
Door-latch and tinkling staples ring;—
At length a whispering voice.

XXVII.

"Awake, awake, arise my love!
How, Helen, dost thou fare?
Wakest thou, or sleep'st? laugh'st thou, or weep'st?
Hast thought on me, my fair?"

XVIII.

"My love! my love!—so late by night!—
I waked, I wept for thee:—
Much have I borne since dawn of morn;
Where, William, couldst thou be?"

XXIX.

"We saddle late—from Hungary
I rode since darkness fell;
And to its bourne we both return
Before the matin-bell."

XXX.

"O rest this night within my arms,
And warm thee in their fold!
Chill howls through hawthorn-bush the wind:—
My love is deadly cold."

XXXI.

"Let the wind howl through hawthorn-bush!
This night we must away;
The steed is wight, the spur is bright;
I cannot stay till day.

XXXII.

"Busk, busk, and boune! Thou mount'st behind
Upon my black Barb steed:
O'er stock and stile, a hundred miles,
We haste to bridal bed."

XXXIII.

"To-night—to-night a hundred miles!—
O dearest William, stay!
The bell strikes twelve—dark, dismal hour!
O wait, my love, till day!"

XXXIV.

"Look here, look here—the moon shines clear—
Full fast I ween we ride;
Mount and away! for ere the day
We reach our bridal bed.

XXXV.

"The black Barb snorts, the bridle rings:
Haste, busk, and boune, and seat thee!
The feast is made, the chamber spread,
The bridal guests await thee."

XXXVI.

Strong love prevailed: She busks, she bounes,
She mounts the Barb behind,
And round her darling William's waist
Her lily arms she twined.

XXXVII.

And, hurry! hurry! off they rode,
As fast as fast might be;
Spurned from the courser's thundering heels
The flashing pebbles flee.

XXXVIII.

And on the right, and on the left,
Ere they could snatch a view,
Fast, fast each mountain, mead, and plain,
And cot, and castle flew.

XXXIX.

"Sit fast—dost fear?—The moon shines clear—
Fleet rides my Barb—keep hold!
Fear'st thou?"—"O no!" she faintly said;
"But why so stern and cold?

XL.

"What yonder rings? what yonder sings?
Why shrieks the owlet grey?"--
"'Tis death-bells' clang, 'tis funeral song,
The body to the clay.

XLI.

"With song and clang, at morrow's dawn,
Ye may inter the dead;
To-night I ride, with my young bride,
To deck our bridal bed.

XLII.

"Come with thy choir, thou coffined guest,
To swell our nuptial song!
Come, priest, to bless our marriage feast!
Come all, come all along!"

XLIII.

Ceased clang and song; down sunk the bier;
The shrouded corpse arose:
And, hurry, hurry! all the train
The thundering steed pursues.

XLIV.

And, forward! forward! on they go;
High snorts the straining steed;
Thick pants the rider's labouring breath.
As headlong on they speed.

XLV.

"O William, why this savage haste?
And where thy bridal bed?"
"'Tis distant far." "Still short and stern?"
"'Tis narrow, trustless maid."

XLVI.

"No room for me?" "Enough for both;—
Speed, speed, my Barb, thy course!"
O'er thundering bridge, through boiling surge,
He drove the furious horse.

XLVII.

Tramp! tramp! along the land they rode;
Splash! splash! along the sea;
The steed is wight, the spur is bright,
The flashing pebbles flee.

XLVIII.

Fled past on right and left how fast
Each forest, grove, and bower;
On right and left fled past how fast
Each city, town, and tower.

XLIX.

"Dost fear? dost fear?—The moon shines clear;—
Dost fear to ride with me?—
Hurrah! hurrah! The dead can ride!"
"O William, let them be!

L.

"See there, see there! What yonder swings
And creaks 'mid whistling rain?"
"Gibbet and steel, the accursèd wheel;
A murderer in his chain.

LI.

"Hollo! thou felon, follow here:
To bridal bed we ride;
And thou shalt prance a fetter dance
Before me and my bride."

LII.

And hurry, hurry! clash, clash, clash!
The wasted form descends;
And fleet as wind through hazel-bush
The wild career attends.

LIII.

Tramp! tramp! along the land they rode,
Splash! splash! along the sea;
The scourge is red, the spur drops blood,
The flashing pebbles flee.

LIV.

How fled what moonshine faintly showed!
How fled what darkness hid!
How fled the earth beneath their feet,
The heaven above their head!

LV.

"Dost fear? dost fear? The moon shines clear,
And well the dead can ride;
Does faithful Helen fear for them?"
"O leave in peace the dead!"

LVI.

"Barb! Barb! methinks I hear the cock;
The sand will soon be run:
Barb! Barb! I smell the morning air;
The race is well nigh done."

LVII.

Tramp! tramp! along the land they rode,
Splash! splash! along the sea;
The scourge is red, the spur drops blood,
The flashing pebbles flee.

LVIII.

"Hurrah! hurrah! well ride the dead;
The bride, the bride is come!
And soon we reach the bridal bed,
For, Helen, here's my home."

LIX.

Reluctant on its rusty hinge
Revolved an iron door,
And by the pale moon's setting beam
Were seen a church and tower.

LX.

With many a shriek and cry whiz round
The birds of midnight, scared;
And rustling like autumnal leaves,
Unhallowed ghosts were heard.

LXI.

O'er many a tomb and tombstone pale
He spurred the fiery horse,
Till sudden at an open grave
He checked the wondrous course.

LXII.

The falling gauntlet quits the rein,
Down drops the casque of steel,
The cuirass leaves his shrinking side,
The spur his gory heel.

LXIII.

The eyes desert the naked skull,
The mouldering flesh the bone,
Till Helen's lily arms entwine
A ghastly skeleton.

LXIV.

The furious Barb snorts fire and foam,
And, with a furious bound,
Dissolves at once in empty air,
And leaves her on the ground.

LXV.

Half seen by fits, by fits half heard,
Pale spectres fleet along;
Wheel round the maid in dismal dance,
And howl the funeral song:

LXVI.

"E'en when the heart's with anguish cleft,
Revere the doom of Heaven.
Her soul is from her body reft;
Her spirit be forgiven!"

THE FIRE-KING.

"The blessings of the evil Genii, which are curses, were upon him."—*Eastern Tale.*

This ballad was written at the request of Mr. Lewis, to be inserted in his "Tales of Wonder," published in 1801. It is the third in a series of four ballads, on the subject of Elementary Spirits. The story is, however, partly historical: for it is recorded, that, during the struggles of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, a knight-templar, called Saint Alban, deserted to the Saracens, and defeated the Christains in many combats, till he was finally routed and slain, in a conflict with King Baldwin, under the walls of Jerusalem.

Bold knights and fair dames, to my harp give an ear,
Of love, and of war, and of wonder to hear;
And you haply may sigh, in the midst of your glee,
At the tale of Count Albert, and fair Rosalie.

O see you that castle, so strong and so high?
And see you that lady, the tear in her eye?
And see you that palmer, from Palestine's land,
The shell on his hat, and the staff in his hand?—

"Now palmer, grey palmer, O tell unto me,
What news bring you home from the Holy Countrie?
And how goes the warfare by Galilee's strand?
And how fare our nobles, the flower of the land?"

"O well goes the warfare by Galilee's wave,
For Gilead, and Nablous, and Ramah we have;
And well fare our nobles by Mount Lebanon,
For the Heathen have lost, and the Christains have won."—

A rich chain of gold 'mid her ringlets there hung;
O'er the palmer's grey locks the fair chain has she flung:
"O palmer, grey palmer, this chain be thy fee,
For the news thou hast brought from the Holy Countrie.

"O palmer, good palmer, by Galilee's wave,
O saw ye Count Albert, the gentle and brave?
When the Crescent went back, and the Red-cross rushed on,
O saw ye him foremost on Mount Lebanon?"—

"O lady, fair lady, the tree green it grows;
O lady, fair lady, the stream pure it flows;
Your castle stands strong, and your hopes soar on high,
But lady, fair lady, all blossoms to die.

"The green boughs they wither, the thunderbolt falls,
In leaves of your castle but levin-scorched walls;
The pure stream runs muddy; the gay hope is gone,
Count Albert is prisoner on Mount Lebanon."—

O she's ta'en a horse, should be fleet at her speed;
And she's ta'en a sword, should be sharp at her need;
And she has ta'en shipping for Palestine's land,
To ransom Count Albert from Soldanrie's hand.

Small thought had Count Albert on fair Rosalie,
Small thought on his faith, or his knighthood, had he;
A heathenish damsel his light heart had won,
The Soldan's fair daughter of Mount Lebanon.

"Oh Christian, brave Christian, my love wouldst thou be,
Three things must thou do ere I hearken to thee:
Our laws and our worship on thee shalt thou take;
And this thou shalt first do for Zulema's sake.

"And, next, in the cavern, where burns evermore
The mystical flame which the Curdmans adore,
Alone, and in silence, three nights shalt thou wake;
And this thou shalt next do for Zulema's sake.

"And, last, thou shalt aid us with counsel and hand,
To drive the Frank robber from Palestine's land;
For my lord and my love then Count Albert I'll take,
When all this is accomplished for Zulema's sake."—

He has thrown by his hemlet and cross-handled sword,
Renouncing his knighthood, denying his Lord;
He has ta'en the green caftan, and turban put on,
For the love of the maiden of fair Lebanon.

And in the dread cavern, deep deep under ground,
Which fifty steel gates and steel portals surround,
He has watched until daybreak, but sight saw he none,
Save the flame burning bright on its altar of stone.

Amazed was the princess, the Soldan amazed,
Sore murmured the priests as on Albert they gazed;
They searched all his garments, and, under his weeds,
They found, and took from him, his rosary beads.

Again in the cavern, deep deep under ground,
He watched the lone night, while the winds whistled round;
Far off was their murmur, it came not more nigh,
The flame burned unmoved, and nought else did he spy.

Loud murmured the priests, and amazed was the king,
While many dark spells of their witchcraft they sing;
They searched Albert's body, and lo! on his breast
Was the sign of the Cross, by his father impressed.

The priests they erase it with care and with pain,
And the recreant returned to the cavern again;
But, as he descended, a whisper there fell!—
It was his good angel, who bade him farewell!

High bristled his hair, his heart fluttered and beat,
And he turned him five steps, half resolved to retreat;
But his heart it was hardened, his purpose was gone,
When he thought on the maiden of fair Lebanon.

Scarce passed he the archway, the threshold scarce trod,
When the winds from the four points of heaven were abroad;
They made each steel portal to rattle and ring,
And, borne on the blast, came the dread Fire-King.

Full sore rocked the cavern whene'er he drew nigh,
The fire on the altar blazed bickering and high;
In volcanic explosions the mountains proclaim
The dreadful approach of the Monarch of Flame.

Unmeasured in height, undistinguished in form,
His breath it was lightning, his voice it was storm;
I ween the stout heart of Count Albert was tame,
When he saw in his terrors the Monarch of Flame.

In his hand a broad falchion blue-glimmered through smoke,
And Mount Lebanon shook as the monarch he spoke:—
"With this brand shalt thou conquer, thus long, and no more,
Till thou bend to the Cross, and the Virgin adore."

The cloud-shrouded arm gives the weapon; and see!
The recreant receives the charmed gift on his knee:
The thunders growl distant, and faint gleam the fires,
As, borne on his whirlwind, the Phantom retires.

Count Albert has armed him the Paynim among.
Though his heart it was false, yet his arm it was strong;
And the Red-cross waxed faint, and the Crescent came on,
From the day he commanded on Mount Lebanon.

From Lebanon's forests to Galilee's wave,
The sands of Samaar drank the blood of the brave;
Till the Knights of the Temple, and Knights of Saint John,
With Salem's King Baldwin, against him came on.

The war-cymbals clattered, the trumpets replied,
The lances were couched, and they closed on each side;
And horsemen and horses Count Albert o'erthrew,
Till he pierced the thick tumult King Baldwin unto.

Against the charmed blade which Count Albert did wield,
The fence had been vain of the King's Red-cross shield;
But a Page thrust him forward the monarch before,
And cleft the proud turban the renegade wore.

So fell was the dint, that Count Albert stooped low
Before the crossed shield, to his steel saddle-bow;
And scarce had he bent to the Red-cross his head,—
"*Bonne grace, notre Dame,*" he unwittingly said.

Sore sighed the charmed sword, for his virtue was o'er;
It sprung from his grasp, and was never seen more;
But true men have said, that the lightning's red wing
Did waft back the brand to the dread Fire-King.

He clenched his set teeth, and his gauntleted hand;
He stretched, with one buffet, that Page on the strand:
As back from the stripling the broken casque rolled,
You might see the blue eyes, and the ringlets of gold.

Short time had Count Albert in horror to stare
On those death-swimming eyeballs, and blood-clotted hair;
For down came the Templars, like Cedron in flood,
And dyed their long lances in Saracen blood.

The Saracens, Curdmans, and Ishmaelites yield
To the scallop, the saltier, and crosleted shield;
And the eagles were gorged with the infidel dead,
From Bethsaida's fountains to Naphtali's head.

The battle is over on Bethsaida's plain.—
Oh, who is yon Paynim lies stretched 'mid the slain?
And who is yon Page lying cold at his knee?—
Oh, who but Count Albert and fair Rosalie.

The Lady was buried in Salem's blessed bound,
The Count he was left to the vulture and hound:
Her soul to high mercy our Lady did bring;
His went on the blast to the dread Fire-King.

Yet many a minstrel, in harping, can tell,
How the Red-cross it conquered, the Crescent it fell;
And lords and gay ladies have sighed, 'mid their glee,
At the tale of Count Albert and fair Rosalie.

FREDERICK AND ALICE.

This tale is imitated, rather than translated, from a fragmen. introduced in Goethe's "Claudina von Villa Bella," where it is sung by a member of a gang of banditti, to engage the attention of the family, while his companions break into the castle. It owes any little merit it may possess to my friend Mr. Lewis, to whom it was sent in an extremely rude state; and who, after some material improvements, published it in his "Tales of Wonder," 1801.

Frederick leaves the land of France,
Homewards hastes his steps to measure,
Careless casts the parting glance,
On the scene of former pleasure;

Joying in his prancing steed,
Keen to prove his untried blade,
Hope's gay dreams the soldier lead
Over mountain, moor, and glade.

Helpless, ruined, left forlorn,
Lovely Alice wept alone;

Mourned o'er love's fond contract torn,
Hope, and peace, and honour flown.

Mark her breast's convulsive throbs!
See, the tear of anguish flows!—
Mingling soon with bursting sobs,
Loud the laugh of frenzy rose.

Wild she cursed and wild she prayed;
Seven long days and nights are o'er;
Death in pity brought his aid,
As the village bell struck four.

Far from her, and far from France,
Faithless Frederick onward rides,
Marking, blithe, the morning's glance
Mantling o'er the mountain's sides.

Heard ye not the boding sound,
As the tongue of yonder tower,
Slowly, to the hills around,
Told the fourth, the fated hour?

Starts the steed, and snuffs the air,
Yet no cause of dread appears;
Bristles high the rider's hair,
Struck with strange mysterious fears.

Desperate, as his terrors rise,
In the steed the spur he hides;
From himself in vain he flies;
Anxious, restless, on he rides.

Seven long days, and seven long nights,
Wild he wandered, woe the while!
Ceaseless care, and causeless fright,
Urge his footsteps many a mile.

Dark the seventh sad night descends;
Rivers swell and rain-streams pour;
While the deafening thunder lends
All the terrors of its roar.

Weary, wet, and spent with toil,
Where his head shall Frederick hide?
Where, but in yon ruined aisle,
By the lightning's flash descried.

To the portal, dank and low,
Fast his steed the wanderer bound;
Down a ruined staircase slow,
Next his darkling way he wound.

Long drear vaults before him lie!
Glimmering lights are seen to glide!—
Blessèd Mary, hear my cry!
Deign a sinner's steps to guide!"—

Often lost their quivering beam,
Still the lights move slow before,
Till they rest their ghastly gleam
Right against an iron door.

Thundering voices from within,
Mixed with peals of laughter, rose;
As they fell, a solemn strain
Lent its wild and wondrous close!

'Midst the din, he seemed to hear
Voice of friends, by death removed;—
Well he knew that solemn air,
'Twas the lay that Alice loved.—

Hark! for now a solemn knell
FOUR times on the still night broke;
FOUR times, at its deadened swell,
Echoes from the ruins spoke.

As the lengthened clangours die,
Slowly opes the iron door!
Straight a banquet met his eye,
But a funeral's form it wore!

Coffins for the seats extend;
All with black the board was spread,
Girt by parent, brother, friend,
Long since numbered with the dead!

Alice, in her grave-clothes bound,
Ghastly smiling, points a seat;
All arose, with thundering sound;
All the expected stranger greet.

High their meagre arms they wave,
Wild their notes of welcome swell;
"Welcome, traitor, to the grave!
Perjured, bid the light farewell!"

THE ERL-KING.

FROM THE GERMAN OF GOETHE.

IT is necessary the reader should be informed, that in the legends of Danish superstition, certain mischievous spirits are supposed to preside over different elements, and to amuse themselves with inflicting calamities on man. One of these is termed the WATER-KING, another the FIRE-KING, and a third the CLOUD-KING. The hero of the present piece is the ERL or OAK-KING, a fiend, who is supposed to dwell in the recesses of the forest, and thence to issue forth upon the benighted traveller to lure him to his destruction.

O! who rides by night through the woodland so wild?
It is the fond Father embracing his Child;
And close the boy nestles within his loved arm,
From the blast of the tempest—to keep himself warm.

"O father! see yonder, see yonder!" he says.
"My boy, upon what dost thou fearfully gaze?"
"O, 'tis the Erl-King with his staff and his shroud!"
"No, my love! it is but a dark wreath of the cloud."

The Phantom speaks.

"O! wilt thou go with me, thou loveliest child?
By many gay sports shall thy hours be beguiled;
My mother keeps for thee full many a fair toy,
And many a fine flower shall she pluck for my boy."—

"O father! my father! and did you not hear
The Erl-King whisper so close in my ear?"—
"Be still, my loved darling, my child be at ease!
It was but the wild blast as it howled through the trees."—

The Phantom.

"O wilt thou go with me, thou loveliest boy!
My daughter shall tend thee with care and with joy;
She will bear thee so lightly through wet and through wild,
And hug thee, and kiss thee, and sing to my child."—

"O father! my father! and saw you not plain
The Erl-King's pale daughter glide past through the rain?"—
"O no, my heart's treasure! I knew it full soon,
It was the grey willow that danced to the moon."—

The Phantom.

"Come with me, come with me, no longer delay!
Or else, silly child, I will drag thee away."—
"O father! O father! now, now, keep your hold!
The Erl-King has seized me—his grasp is so cold."—

Sore trembled the father; he spurred through the wild,
Clasping close to his bosom his shuddering child.
He reaches his dwelling in doubt and in dread;
But, clasped to his bosom, the infant was dead!

Miscellaneous.

HELLVELLYN.

In the spring of 1805, a young gentleman of talents, and of a most amiable disposition, perished by losing his way on the mountain Hellvellyn. His remains were not discovered till three months afterwards, when they were found guarded by a faithful terrier-bitch, his constant attendant during frequent solitary rambles through the wilds of Cumberland and Westmoreland.

I climbed the dark brow of the mighty Hellvellyn,
Lakes and mountains beneath me gleamed misty and wide;
All was still, save, by fits, when the eagle was yelling,
And starting around me the echoes replied.
On the right, Striden-edge round the Red-tarn was bending,
And Catchedicam its left verge was defending,
One huge nameless rock in the front was ascending,
When I marked the sad spot where the wanderer had died.

Dark green was that spot 'mid the brown mountain-heather,
Where the Pilgrim of Nature lay stretched in decay,
Like the corpse of an outcast abandoned to weather,
Till the mountain-winds wasted the tenantless clay.
Not yet quite deserted, though lonely extended,
For, faithful in death, his mute favourite attended,
The much-loved remains of her master defended,
And chased the hill-fox and the raven away.

How long didst thou think that his silence was slumber?
When the wind waved his garment, how oft didst thou start?
How many long days and long nights didst thou number,
Ere he faded before thee, the friend of thy heart?
And, O! was it meet, that,—no requiem read o'er him,
No mother to weep, and no friend to deplore him,
And thou, little guardian, alone stretched before him,—
Unhonoured the Pilgrim from life should depart?

When a Prince to the fate of the Peasant has yielded,
The tapestry waves dark round the dim-lighted hall;
With scutcheons of silver the coffin is shielded,
And pages stand mute by the canopied pall:
Through the courts, at deep midnight, the torches are gleaming;

In the proudly arched chapel the banners are beaming;
Far adown the long aisle sacred music is streaming,
Lamenting a Chief of the People should fall.

But meeter for thee, gentle lover of nature,
To lay down thy head like the meek mountain lamb,
When, wildered, he drops from some cliff huge in stature,
And draws his last sob by the side of his dam.
And more stately thy couch by this desert lake lying,
Thy obsequies sung by the grey plover flying,
With one faithful friend but to witness thy dying,
In the arms of Hellvellyn and Catchedicam.

THE MAID OF TORO.*

O, LOW shone the sun on the fair lake of Toro,
And weak were the whispers that waved the dark wood,
All as a fair maiden, bewildered in sorrow,
Sorely sighed to the breezes, and wept to the flood.
"O saints! from the mansions of bliss lowly bending:
Sweet Virgin! who hearest the suppliant's cry;
Now grant my petition, in anguish ascending,
My Henry restore, or let Eleanor die!"—

All distant and faint were the sounds of the battle,
With the breezes they rise, with the breezes they fail,
Till the shout, and the groan, and the conflict's dread rattle,
And the chase's wild clamour, came loading the gale.
Breathless she gazed on the woodlands so dreary;
Slowly approaching a warrior was seen;
Life's ebbing tide marked his footsteps so weary,
Cleft was his helmet, and woe was his mien.

"O, save thee, fair maid, for our armies are flying!
O, save thee, fair maid, for thy guardian is low!
Deadly cold on yon heath thy brave Henry is lying;
And fast through the woodland approaches the foe."
Scarce could he falter the tidings of sorrow,
And scarce could she hear them, benumbed with despair:
And when the sun sunk on the sweet lake of Toro,
For ever he set to the Brave and the Fair.

*This and the three following pieces were first published in Haydn's Collection of Scottish Airs, Edinburgh, 1806.

THE PALMER.

"O OPEN the door, some pity to show;
Keen blows the northern wind,
The glen is white with the drifted snow;
And the path is hard to find.

"No Outlaw seeks your castle-gate,
From chasing the king's deer,
Though even an Outlaw's wretched state
Might claim compassion here.

"A weary Palmer, worn and weak,
I wander for my sin;
O open, for your lady's sake,
A pilgrim's blessing win!

"I'll give you pardons from the pope,
And reliques from o'er the sea,—
O, if for these you will not ope,
Yet open for charity.

"The hare is crouching in her form,
The hart beside the hind;
An aged man, amid the storm,
No shelter can I find.

"You hear the Ettricke's sullen roar,
Dark, deep, and strong is he,
And I must ford the Ettricke o'er,
Unless you pity me.

"The iron gate is bolted hard,
At which I knock in vain;
The owner's heart is closer barred,
Who hears me thus complain.

"Farewell, farewell! and Mary grant,
When old and frail you be,
You never may the shelter want,
That's now denied to me."

The Ranger on his couch lay warm,
And heard him plead in vain;
But oft amid December's storm,
He'll hear that voice again.

For lo, when through the vapours dank,
Morn shone on Ettricke fair,
A corpse amid the alders rank,
The Palmer weltered there.

WANDERING WILLIE.

All joy was bereft me the day that you left me,
And climbed the tall vessel to sail yon wide sea;
O weary betide it! I wandered beside it,
And banned it for parting my Willie and me.

Far o'er the wave hast thou followed thy fortune;
Oft fought the squadrons of France and of Spain·
Ae kiss of welcome worth twenty at parting,
Now hae I gotten my Willie again.

When the sky it was mirk, and the winds they were wailing,
I sate on the beach wi' the tear in my e'e,
And thought o' the bark where my Willie was sailing,
And wished that the tempest could a' blaw on me.

Now that thy gallant ship rides at her mooring,
Now that my wanderer 's in safety at hame,
Music to me were the wildest winds roaring,
That e'er o'er Inch Keith drove the dark ocean faem.

When the lights they did blaze, and the guns they did rattle,
And blithe was each heart for the great victory,
In secret I wept for the dangers of battle,
And thy glory itself was scarce comfort to me.

But now shalt thou tell, while I eagerly listen,
Of each bold adventure, of every brave scar:
And, trust me, I'll smile, though my e'en they may glisten;
For sweet after danger 's the tale of the war.

And oh how we doubt when there's distance 'tween lovers,
When there's naething to speak to the heart through the e'e;
How often the kindest and warmest prove rovers,
And the love of the faithfullest ebbs like the sea.

Till, at times, could I help it? I pined and I pondered,
If love would change notes like the bird on the tree—
Now I'll ne'er ask if thine eyes may hae wandered,
Enough, thy leal heart has been constant to me.

Welcome, from sweeping o'er sea and through channel,
Hardships and danger despising for fame,
Furnishing story for glory's bright annal,
Welcome, my wanderer, to Jeanie and hame.

Enough now thy story in annals of glory
Has humbled the pride of France, Holland, and Spain;
No more shalt thou grieve me, no more shalt thou leave me,
I never will part with my Willie again.

THE MAID OF NEIDPATH.

THERE is a tradition in Tweeddale, that, when Neidpath Castle, near Peebles, was inhabited by the Earls of March, a mutual passion subsisted between a daughter of that noble family and a son of the laird of Tushielaw, in Ettricke Forest. As the alliance was thought unsuitable by her parents, the young man went abroad. During his absence, the lady fell in a consumption; and at length, as the only means of saving her life, her father consented that her lover should be recalled. On the day when he was expected to pass through Peebles, on the road to Tushielaw, the young lady, though much exhausted, caused herself to be carried to the balcony of a house in Peebles, belonging to the family, that she might see him as he rode past. Her anxiety and eagerness gave such force to her organs, that she is said to have distinguished his horse's footsteps at an incredible distance. But Tushielaw, unprepared for the change in her appearance, and not expecting to see her in that place, rode on, without recognizing her, or even slackening his pace. The lady was unable to support the shock, and, after a short struggle, died in the arms of her attendants. There is an incident similar to this traditional tale in Count Hamilton's "Fleur d'Epine."

O LOVERS' eyes are sharp to see,
And lovers' ears in hearing;
And love, in life's extremity,
Can lend an hour of cheering.
Disease had been in Mary's bower,
And slow decay from mourning,
Though now she sits on Neidpath's tower,
To watch her love's returning.

All sunk and dim her eyes so bright,
Her form decayed by pining,
Till through her wasted hand, at night,
You saw the taper shining;
By fits, a sultry hectic hue
Across her cheek was flying;
By fits, so ashy pale she grew
Her maidens thought her dying.

Yet keenest powers to see and hear,
Seemed in her frame residing;
Before the watch-dog pricked his ear,
She heard her lover's riding;
Ere scarce a distant form was kenned,
She knew, and waved, to greet him;
And o'er the battlement did bend,
As on the wing to meet him.

He came—he passed—a heedless gaze,
As o'er some stranger glancing,
Her welcome spoke, in faltering phrase,
Lost in his courser's prancing—
The castle arch, whose hollow tone
Returns each whisper spoken,
Could scarcely catch the feeble moan,
Which told her heart was broken.

THE BARD'S INCANTATION.

WRITTEN UNDER THE THREAT OF INVASION, IN THE AUTUMN OF 1804.

Published in the Edinburgh Annual Register, 1808.

THE Forest of Glenmore is drear,
It is all of black pine, and the dark oak-tree;
And the midnight wind, to the mountain deer
Is whistling the forest lullaby:—
The moon looks through the drifting storm,
But the troubled lake reflects not her form,
For the waves roll whitening to the land,
And dash against the shelvy strand.

There is a voice among the trees
That mingles with the groaning oak—
That mingles with the stormy breeze,
And the lake-waves dashing against the rock;—
There is a voice within the wood,
The voice of the Bard in fitful mood,
His song was louder than the blast,
As the Bard of Glenmore through the forest passed.

"Wake ye from your sleep of death,
Minstrels and Bards of other days!
For the midnight wind is on the heath,
And the midnight meteors dimly blaze:
The spectre with his bloody hand,*
Is wandering through the wild woodland;
The owl and the raven are mute for dread,
And the time is meet to awake the dead!

"Souls of the mighty! wake and say,
To what high strain your harps were strung,
When Lochlin ploughed her billowy way,
And on your shores her Norsemen flung?
Her Norsemen trained to spoil and blood,
Skilled to prepare the raven's food,

* The forest of Glenmore is haunted by a spirit called Lhamdearg, or Red-hand.

All by your harpings doomed to die
On bloody Largs and Loncarty.*

"Mute are ye all? No murmurs strange
Upon the midnight breeze sail by;
Nor through the pines with whistling change
Mimic the harp's wild harmony!
Mute are ye now?—Ye ne'er were mute,
When Murder with his bloody foot,
And Rapine with his iron hand
Were hovering near your mountain strand.

"O yet awake the strain to tell,
By every deed in song enrolled,
By every chief who fought or fell,
For Albion's weal in battle bold:—
From Coilgach,† first who rolled his car,
Through the deep ranks of Roman war,
To him of veteran memory dear,
Who victor died on Aboukir.

"By all their swords, by all their scars,
By all their names, a mighty spell!
By all their wounds, by all their wars,
Arise, the mighty strain to tell;
For fiercer than fierce Hengist's strain,
More impious than the heathen Dane,
More grasping than all-grasping Rome,
Gaul's ravening legions hither come!"—

The wind is hushed, and still the lake—
Strange murmurs fill my tinkling ears,
Bristles my hair, my sinews quake,
At the dread voice of other years—
"When targets clashed, and bugles rung,
And blades round warriors' heads were flung,
The foremost of the band were we,
And hymned the joys of Liberty!"

TO A LADY.

WITH FLOWERS FROM A ROMAN WALL.

Published in the Edinburg Annual Register for 1808.

TAKE these flowers, which, purple waving,
On the ruined rampart grew,
Where, the sons of freedom braving,
Rome's imperial standards flew.

* Where the Norwegian invader of Scotland received two bloody defeats.

† The Galgacus of Tacitus.

Warriors from the breach of danger
Pluck no longer laurels there:
They but yield the passing stranger
Wild-flower wreaths for Beauty's hair.

THE VIOLET.

Published in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1808.

The violet in her green-wood bower,
Where birchen boughs with hazels mingle,
May boast itself the fairest flower
In glen, or copse, or forest dingle.

Though fair her gems of azure hue,
Beneath the dew-drop's weight reclining;
I've seen an eye of lovelier blue,
More sweet through watery lustre shining.

The summer sun that dew shall dry,
Ere yet the day be passed its morrow;
No longer in my false love's eye
Remained the tear of parting sorrow.

HUNTING SONG.

Published in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1808.

Waken lords and ladies gay,
On the mountain dawns the day,
All the jolly chase is here,
With hawk, and horse, and hunting-spear.
Hounds are in their couples yelling,
Hawks are whistling, horns are knelling,
Merrily, merrily, mingle they,
"Waken lords and ladies gay."

Waken lords and ladies gay,
The mist has left the mountain grey,
Springlets in the dawn are steaming,
Diamonds on the brake are gleaming;
And foresters have busy been,
To track the buck in thicket green;
Now we come to chant our lay,
"Waken lords and ladies gay."

Waken lords and ladies gay,
To the green-wood haste away;

We can show you where he lies,
Fleet of foot, and tall of size;
We can show the marks he made,
When 'gainst the oak his antlers frayed;
You shall see him brought to bay,—
"Waken lords and ladies gay."

Louder, louder chant the lay,
Waken lords and ladies gay!
Tell them youth, and mirth, and glee,
Run a course as well as we;
Time, stern huntsman! who can balk,
Stanch as hound, and fleet as hawk:
Think of this, and rise with day,
Gentle lords and ladies gay.

THE RESOLVE.

IN IMITATION OF AN OLD ENGLISH POEM.

Published in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1808.

My wayward fate I needs must plain,
Though bootless be the theme;
I loved, and was beloved again,
Yet all was but a dream:
For, as her love was quickly got,
So it was quickly gone;
No more I'll bask in flame so hot,
But coldly dwell alone.

Not maid more bright than maid was e'er
My fancy shall beguile,
By flattering word, or feignèd tear,
By gesture, look, or smile:
No more I'll call the shaft fair shot,
Till it has fairly flown,
Nor scorch me at a flame so hot;—
I'll rather freeze alone.

Each ambushed Cupid I'll defy,
In cheek, or chin, or brow,
And deem the glance of woman's eye
As weak as woman's vow:
I'll lightly hold the lady's heart,
That is but lightly won;
I'll steel my breast to beauty's art,
And learn to live alone.

The flaunting torch soon blazes out,
The diamond's ray abides,

The flame its glory hurls about,
The gem its lustre hides;
Such gem I fondly deemed was mine,
And glowed a diamond stone,
But, since each eye may see it shine,
I'll darkling dwell alone.

No waking dream shall tinge my thought
With dyes so bright and vain,
No silken net, so slightly wrought,
Shall tangle me again:
No more I'll pay so dear for wit,
I'll live upon mine own,
Nor shall wild passion trouble it,—
I'll rather dwell alone.

And thus I'll hush my heart to rest,—
"Thy loving labour's lost;
Thou shalt no more be wildly blessed,
To be so strangely crossed:
The widowed turtles mateless die,
The phœnix is but one;
They seek no loves—no more will I—
I'll rather dwell alone."

THE LAST WORDS OF CADWALLON; OR, THE DYING BARD.*

THE Welsh tradition bears, that a Bard, on his death-bed, demanded his harp, and played the air to which these verses are adapted; requesting that it might be performed at his funeral.

AIR—DAFFYDZ GANGWEN.

I.

DINAS EMLINN, lament; for the moment is nigh,
When mute in the woodlands thine echoes shall die:
No more by sweet Teivi CADWALLON shall rave,
And mix his wild notes with the wild dashing wave.

II.

In spring and in autumn, thy glories of shade
Unhonoured shall flourish, unhonoured shall fade;
For soon shall be lifeless the eye and the tongue
That viewed them with rapture, with rapture that sung.

* This song and "The Norman Horse-Shoe" were first published in vol. i. of Thomson's "Select Collection of Original Welsh Airs," issued in 1809.

III.

Thy sons, Dinas Emlinn, may march in their pride,
And chase the proud Saxon from Prestatyn's side;
But where is the harp shall give life to their name?
And where is the bard shall give heroes their fame?

IV.

And oh, Dinas Emlinn! thy daughters so fair,
Who heave the white bosom, and wave the dark hair,
What tuneful enthusiast shall worship their eye,
When half of their charms with CADWALLON shall die?

V.

Then adieu, silver Teivi! I quit thy loved scene,
To join the dim choir of the bards who have been;
With Lewarch, and Meilor, and Merlin the Old,
And sage Taliessin, high harping to hold.

VI.

And adieu, Dinas Emlinn! still green be thy shades,
Unconquered thy warriors, and matchless thy maids!
And thou, whose faint warblings my weakness can tell,
Farewell, my loved Harp! my last treasure, farewell!

THE NORMAN HORSE-SHOE.

THE Welsh, inhabiting a mountainous country, and possessing only an inferior breed of horses, were usually unable to encounter the shock of the Anglo-Norman cavalry. Occasionally, however, they were successful in repelling the invaders; and the following verses celebrate a supposed defeat of Clare, Earl of Striguil and Pembroke, and of Neville, Baron of Chepstow, Lords-Marchers of Monmouthshire. Rymny is a stream which divides the counties of Monmouth and Glamorgan: Caerphili, the scene of the supposed battle, is a vale upon its banks, dignified by the ruins of a very ancient castle.

AIR—THE WAR-SONG OF THE MEN OF GLAMORGAN.

I.

RED glows the forge in Striguil's bounds,
And hammers din, and anvil sounds,
And armourers, with iron toil,
Barb many a steed for battle's broil.
Foul fall the hand which bends the steel
Around the courser's thundering heel,
That e'er shall dint a sable wound
On fair Glamorgan's velvet ground!

II.

From Chepstow's towers, ere dawn of morn,
Was heard afar the bugle-horn;

And forth, in banded pomp and pride,
Stout Clare and fiery Neville ride.
They swore, their banners broad should gleam,
In crimson light, on Rymny's stream;
They vowed, Caerphili's sod should feel
The Norman charger's spurning heel.

III.

And sooth they swore—the sun arose,
And Rymny's wave with crimson glows;
For Clare's red banner, floating wide,
Rolled down the stream to Severn's tide!
And sooth they vowed,—the trampled green
Showed where hot Neville's charge had been;
In every sable hoof-tramp stood
A Norman horseman's curdling blood!

IV.

Old Chepstow's brides may curse the toil,
That armed stout Clare for Cambrian broil;
Their orphans long the art may rue,
For Neville's war-horse forged the shoe.
No more the stamp of armed steed
Shall dint Glamorgan's velvet mead;
Nor trace be there, in early spring,
Save of the Fairies' emerald ring.

THE POACHER.

This and the following piece were published under the title of "Fragments," in the Edinburgh Annual Register of 1809.

Welcome, grave stranger, to our green retreats,
Where health with exercise and freedom meets!
Thrice welcome, sage, whose philosophic plan
By Nature's limits metes the rights of man;
Generous as he, who now for freedom bawls,
Now gives full value for true Indian shawls;
O'er court and customhouse his shoe who flings,
Now bilks excisemen, and now bullies kings!
Like his, I ween, thy comprehensive mind
Holds laws as mouse-traps baited for mankind;
Thine eye, applausive, each sly vermin sees,
That balks the snare, yet battens on the cheese;
Thine ear has heard, with scorn instead of awe,
Our buckskinned justices expound the law,
Wire-draw the acts that fix for wires the pain,
And for the netted partridge noose the swain;
And thy vindictive arm would fain have broke
The last light fetter of the feudal yoke,

To give the denizens of wood and wild,
Nature's free race, to each her free-born child.
Hence hast thou marked, with grief, fair London's race
Mocked with the boon of one poor Easter chase,
And longed to send them forth as free as when
Poured o'er Chantilly the Parisian train,
When musket, pistol, blunderbuss, combined,
And scarce the field-pieces were left behind!
A squadron's charge each leveret's heart dismayed
On every covey fired a bold brigade—
La Douce Humanité approved the sport,
For great the alarm indeed, yet small the hurt.
Shouts patriotic solemnized the day,
And Seine re-echoed *Vive la Liberté!*
But mad *Citoyen*, meek *Monsieur* again,
With some few added links resumes his chain;
Then, since such scenes to France no more are known,
Come, view with me a hero of thine own!
One, whose free actions vindicate the cause
Of sylvan liberty o'er feudal laws.

Seek we yon glades, where the proud oak o'ertops
Wide-waving seas of birch and hazel copse,
Leaving between deserted isles of land,
Where stunted heath is patched with ruddy sand;
And lonely on the waste the yew is seen,
Or straggling hollies spread a brighter green.
Here, little worn, and winding dark and steep,
Our scarce-marked path descends yon dingle deep:
Follow—but heedful, cautious of a trip,—
In earthly mire philosophy may slip.
Step slow and wary o'er that swampy stream,
Till, guided by the charcoal's smothering steam,
We reach the frail yet barricaded door
Of hovel formed for poorest of the poor;
No hearth the fire, no vent the smoke receives,
The walls are wattles, and the covering leaves;
For, if such hut, our forest statutes say,
Rise in the progress of one night and day;
Though placed where still the Conqueror's hests o'erawe,
And his son's stirrup shines the badge of law;
The builder claims the unenviable boon,
To tenant dwelling, framed as slight and soon
As wigwam wild, that shrouds the native frore
On the bleak coast of frost-barred Labrador.*
Approach, and through the unlatticed window peep—
Nay, shrink not back, the inmate is asleep;

* Such is the law in the New Forest, Hampshire, tending greatly to increase the various settlements of thieves, smugglers, and deer-stealers, who infest it. In the forest courts the presiding judge wears as a badge of office an antique stirrup, said to have been that of William Rufus. See Mr. William Rose's spirited poem, entitled "The Red King."

Sunk 'mid yon sordid blankets, till the sun
Stoop to the west, the plunderer's toils are done.
Loaded and primed, and prompt for desperate hand,
Rifle and fowling-piece beside him stand;
While round the hut are in disorder laid
The tools and booty of his lawless trade;
For force or fraud, resistance or escape,
The crow, the saw, the bludgeon, and the crape.
His pilfered powder in yon nook he hoards,
And the filched lead the church's roof affords—
(Hence shall the rector's congregation fret,
That, while his sermon 's dry, his walls are wet.)
The fish-spear barbed, the sweeping net are there,
Doe-hides, and pheasant plumes, and skins of hare,
Cordage for toils, and wiring for the snare;
Bartered for game from chase or warren won,
Yon cask holds moonlight,* run when moon was none;
And late-snatched spoils lie stowed in hutch apart,
To wait the associate higgler's evening cart.

Look on his pallet foul, and mark his rest:
What scenes perturbed are acting in his breast!
His sable brow is wet and wrung with pain,
And his dilated nostril toils in vain;
For short and scant the breath each effort draws,
And 'twixt each effort Nature claims a pause.
Beyond the loose and sable neckcloth stretched,
His sinewy throat seems by convulsions twitched,
While the tongue falters, as to utterance loth,
Sounds of dire import—watchword, threat, and oath.
Though, stupefied by toil, and drugged with gin,
The body sleep, the restless guest within
Now plies on wood and wold his lawless trade,
Now in the fangs of justice wakes dismayed.—

"Was that wild start of terror and despair,
Those bursting eyeballs, and that wildered air,
Signs of compunction for a murdered hare?
Do the locks bristle and the eyebrows arch,
For grouse or partridge massacred in March?"—

No, scoffer, no! Attend, and mark with awe,
There is no wicket in the gate of law!
He, that would e'er so lightly set ajar
That awful portal, must undo each bar;
Tempting occasion, habit, passion, pride,
Will join to storm the breach, and force the barrier wide.

That ruffian, whom true men avoid and dread,
Whom bruisers, poachers, smugglers, call Black Ned,

* A cant name for smuggled spirits.

Was Edward Mansell once;—the lightest heart,
That ever played on holiday his part!
The leader he in every Christmas game,
The harvest-feast grew blither when he came,
And liveliest on the chords the bow did glance,
When Edward named the tune and led the dance.
Kind was his heart, his passions quick and strong,
Hearty his laugh, and jovial was his song;
And if he loved a gun, his father swore,
"'Twas but a trick of youth would soon be o'er,
Himself had had the same, some thirty years before."

But he, whose humours spurn law's awful yoke,
Must herd with those by whom law's bonds are broke.
The common dread of justice soon allies
The clown, who robs the warren, or excise,
With sterner felons trained to act more dread,
Even with the wretch by whom his fellow bled.
Then,—as in plagues the foul contagions pass,
Leavening and festering the corrupted mass,—
Guilt leagues with guilt, while mutual motives draw,
Their hope impunity, their fear the law;
Their foes, their friends, their rendezvous the same,
Till the revenue balked, or pilfered game,
Flesh the young culprit, and example leads
To darker villany, and direr deeds.

Wild howled the wind the forest glades along,
And oft the owl renewed her dismal song;
Around the spot where erst he felt the wound,
Red William's spectre walked his midnight round.
When o'er the swamp he cast his blighting look,
From the green marshes of the stagnant brook
The bittern's sullen shout the sedges shook!
The waning moon, with storm-presaging gleam,
Now gave and now withheld her doubtful beam;
The old Oak stooped his arms, then flung them high,
Bellowing and groaning to the troubled sky—
'Twas then, that, couched amid the brushwood sere,
In Malwood-walk young Mansell watched the deer:
The fattest buck received his deadly shot—
The watchful keeper heard, and sought the spot.
Stout were their hearts, and stubborn was their strife,
O'erpowered at length the Outlaw drew his knife!
Next morn a corpse was found upon the fell—
The rest his waking agony may tell!

SONG.

Published in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1809.

Oh, say not, my love, with that mortified air,
That your spring-time of pleasure is flown,
Nor bid me to maids that are younger repair,
For those raptures that still are thine own.

Though April his temples may wreathe with the vine,
Its tendrils in infancy curled,
'Tis the ardour of August matures us the wine,
Whose life-blood enlivens the world.

Though thy form, that was fashioned as light as a fay's,
Has assumed a proportion more round,
And thy glance, that was bright as a falcon's at gaze,
Looks soberly now on the ground,—

Enough, after absence to meet me again,
Thy steps still with ecstasy move;
Enough, that those dear sober glances retain
For me the kind language of love.

* * * * * * * *

(The rest was illegible, the fragment being torn across by a racket-stroke.)

EPITAPH.

DESIGNED FOR A MONUMENT TO BE ERECTED IN LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL, AGREEABLY TO THE BEQUEST OF THE LATE MISS ANNA SEWARD, TO DESIGNATE THE BURIAL-PLACE OF HER FATHER, THE REV. THOMAS SEWARD, A CANON OF THAT CATHEDRAL, IN WHICH SHE IS HERSELF INTERRED.

Published in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1809.

Amid these aisles, where once his precepts showed
The heavenward pathway which in life he trod,
This simple tablet marks a father's bier,
And those he loved in life, in death are near;
For him, for them, a daughter bade it rise,
Memorial of domestic charities.

Still wouldst thou know why o'er the marble spread,
In female grace, the willow droops her head;

Why on her branches, silent and unstrung,
The minstrel harp is emblematic hung;
What poet's voice is smothered here in dust,
Till waked to join the chorus of the just,——
Lo! one brief line an answer sad supplies,
Honoured, beloved, and wept, here SEWARD lies!
Her worth, her warmth of heart, let friendship say,
Go seek her genius in her living lay.

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